

Review of Public Administration
Northern Ireland

Structured Interviews

Final Report

17 January 2003

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17 January 2003

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.0 BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to seek the views of informed users and providers on a series of key issues which are relevant to the Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland. It was carried out by Research & Evaluation Services (RES) in partnership with three independent associates, Richard Buchanan, Jim Jamison and Alan Elliott.

In order to explore opinions from a wide range of perspectives, RES and Associates identified fifty key providers of public services and fifty key users for interview from across a broad spectrum of public services. In the event, a number of both users and providers were not available for interview and the breakdown of those interviewed is as follows:

- 47 with key providers of public services (11 face to face and 36 by telephone)
- 43 with key users (9 face to face and 34 by telephone).

The questions posed were based on the terms of reference for the Review and the themes which had emerged from the pre-consultation exercises.

3.0 KEY FINDINGS

4.0.0 Democratic Accountability (addressing the role of elected representatives, and the issues of community responsiveness and subsidiarity)

In terms of the **role of elected representatives in influencing local services**, most providers felt that councils should have more influence over the way in which services were delivered in their areas. Some providers felt this should extend to councils taking actual responsibility for the delivery of local services. Those who advocated a greater role for councils in relation to the delivery of services suggested that the most appropriate services would be those with a particularly local dimension, such as youth and library services and the maintenance of minor roads¹ and local footpaths.

¹ The majority of those we interviewed considered that responsibility for the main roads should remain at regional level.

However, some felt it more appropriate to transfer responsibilities for services such as planning and housing to councils only if there were fewer of them and they were given a sub-regional remit. In contrast, many users had concerns about the capacity of councils and their current competence to assume additional responsibility for service delivery. Others were concerned about the influence that party politics could have on important decisions in relation to key issues such as the location of acute hospitals. However, most users recognised the value of the local perspective on service provision that councillors could impart.

In terms of the **composition of public bodies**, there were mixed views among key users and key providers about the extent to which local elected representatives should be members of public bodies. Overall, most thought that local elected representatives should occupy around thirty to forty percent of the places available. Only a very small number of those we interviewed felt that local elected representatives should occupy a majority of places on such bodies. In addition, many people, principally providers, saw merit in having professionals appointed to public bodies with lay members appointed on the basis of competence.

Providers thought that organisations had improved in their efforts to **address local need**. This perception was not generally matched by users, who were cynical about consultation exercises which many described as cosmetic. There was a general view that councils should at least seek to ensure that decisions in relation to public services took account of the particular characteristics and needs of the people in their areas. One view expanded on this to propose that councils should facilitate the process of developing a strategic vision for their areas, which would then be translated into action by a range of local partnerships.

Although providers generally thought that they had made good progress in relation to the **provision of information about services and complaints procedures**, users felt that there was room for considerable improvement and a need for more innovative approaches in both these areas.

2.0.0 Equality, Human Rights and New TSN

Few users or providers had any contribution to make to the Review's consideration of these issues. Most suggested that the various schemes and monitoring regimes currently in place were sufficient to ensure that these issues were adequately addressed. There was a general concern among users and providers that the statutory requirements relating to equality had overwhelmed organisations in the public, voluntary and community sectors with excessive and cumbersome bureaucracy.

3.0.0 Quality of Service

The majority of providers saw at least some merit in the various **quality initiatives** adopted by public bodies. They considered that the process of implementing these initiatives had inspired an outward looking, customer-focused approach, which, in the opinion of providers, was bound to secure at least some benefits for the public. However, both users and providers felt that quality awards were of little or no interest to the public and what influenced people most were their personal experiences of the organisations concerned.

Many commended the *Northern Ireland Housing Executive* as being most active in the field of **customer involvement** in the development of services.

The creation of one-stop shops (or first-stop shops) was the most common suggestion for improving access to public services.

Providers thought that organisations had made some useful progress in developing ways of **addressing complaints** from the public but users felt that service providers were too defensive in the way in which they responded to complaints.

4.0.0 Co-ordination of Services (addressing the issue of organisational co-terminosity)

Few providers saw the absence of **common boundaries** across public bodies as an issue that would be likely to impair public access to services. Some thought it was more of an issue for the bodies themselves in terms of planning and co-ordinating services and trying to achieve 'joined-up' service delivery. It did not appear to be an issue for users.

5.0.0 Scope of the Public Sector and Partnership Working (addressing models of service delivery and the public sector's ability to cope with change)

Users and providers were willing to consider more use of new **models of service delivery** provided they incorporated appropriate checks and balances to ensure quality and value for money. Users, however, stressed the need to ensure that in partnerships between the public and voluntary sectors, all partners were equal. Some providers, meanwhile, pointed to the need to ensure that partnerships were an integral part of the existing decision-making framework rather than an add on.

There were some cautionary notes from providers about the long-term merits of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and Public Private Partnerships (PPP). There were also concerns from users and some providers about whether the profit-making ethos in the **private sector** was consistent with value for money in public service delivery.

Some providers felt that the public sector had demonstrated a degree of adaptability to change in coping with devolution but many users thought there was a need for a **culture change** programme in the public sector and in particular in the Civil Service.

6.0.0 Modernisation and Value for Money (addressing value for money in public services, efficiency and effectiveness)

Providers and users thought there was scope for **improving value for money** in public service delivery by the use of a combination of measures such as rationalising services and centralising/smart purchasing. A number of

providers thought there was particular scope for combining common services such as human resource management and accounting within and between authorities. Many also suggested that there should be more movement of people between the various sectors to enhance experience and knowledge.

The vast majority of those interviewed felt that Northern Ireland was both **over-governed**, with too many councils (and councillors) and **over-administered** with too many non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs). None had strong views on how many councils there should be, although the most popular suggestion was that there should be a council for each county and one each for the cities of Derry and Belfast. As regards administration, most questioned the need for five Education and Library Boards and four Health and Social Services Boards, suggesting that in each case these could be reduced either to one regional authority or that their functions could be transferred to the respective government departments.

1.1 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The interviews have generated a wealth of information encapsulating the expressed views of a representative selection of key public service users and providers across Northern Ireland.

The conclusions to be drawn from the interviews cannot simply be on the basis either of numerical weight or of strength of opinion. We have attempted in our report of the research **findings** to give due weight to contributions that reflected frequently expressed opinions or that we considered pertinent and well argued.

Democratic Accountability

The suggestion that councils should have more influence over local services, possibly extending to responsibility for delivery, was based on the premise that the greater the extent of devolution, the more sensitive decisions would be to local circumstances and needs. The most appropriate services for devolution were seen to be those with a particularly local dimension, such as youth and

library services and the maintenance of footpaths and minor roads. The devolution of responsibility for services such as planning and housing to councils was conditional on there being fewer councils with more of a sub-regional remit.

In contrast, many users had reservations about councils' capacity, competence and political impartiality. However, most users recognised the value of the local perspective on service provision that councillors could impart.

There is clearly a widespread perception among both provider and user representatives that public services and the organisations that deliver them may not be sufficiently sensitive to the needs of local people. Any new structures proposed by the Review will, therefore, need to provide reassurance to local people that their views are being represented to organisations that have responsibility for the design and delivery of public services. This might be achieved by the creation of structures that ensure greater involvement both of local elected representatives and informed users from the voluntary and community sectors. In addition, it was felt that statutory organisations could develop more effective ways of consulting people.

However, the advantages that greater local knowledge might have for the quality of decision-making would have to be weighed against potential diseconomies of scale arising from the dislocation of services that are currently planned and delivered together. There must also be a question mark against whether quality of delivery would inevitably be improved through devolution to local level.

Equality, Human Rights and New TSN

Respondents welcomed in principle the new equality requirements on public bodies in Northern Ireland. A clear view was, however, expressed both by provider and user organisations, that the method of implementation of these requirements had greatly burdened both statutory and non-statutory, and risked substituting form-filling for substance.

The responses to our questions suggest that there is confidence that service providers are adequately addressing these matters and that there are no issues of specific relevance to the Review. However, the overall burden of the equality legislation could clearly be lessened if there were a smaller number of public bodies undertaking Equality Impact Assessments and generating material for consultation. In addition, assuring equality of opportunity and equity of treatment should in principle be more straightforward with a smaller number of larger organisations.

Quality of Service

The provider representatives we interviewed were generally more positive about the impact of quality initiatives and about progress made in improving complaints procedures than the users.

This is an area where evidence of benefit seems to be lacking. There appears to be a strong case for proper evaluation of quality initiatives so that public bodies in the future could know which are likely to be most effective in improving organisational performance and/or customer service in their particular circumstances. There also appears to be a need to set higher standards for complaints procedures, in terms of ensuring that they are easily understood, are as streamlined as possible and provide confidence that people's complaints are addressed as fairly and objectively as possible.

Co-ordination of Services

Lack of co-terminosity was generally seen to make it more difficult for providers to plan and co-ordinate their services jointly to defined populations. However, this alone is not a sufficient reason for a reorganisation of services. On the other hand, if reorganisation takes place for wider reasons, there is a strong case for aligning organisational boundaries as far as practicable. For example, in the event of emergencies such as major flooding, where many different agencies need to be involved in serving the same population, lack of co-terminosity could be potentially dangerous.

Scope of the Public Sector and Partnership Working

There was strong support for partnership working, with user representatives pressing the case for the various partners being on an equal footing. Such parity of esteem might be difficult fully to achieve in practice, given that some organisations are likely to have greater standing than others in terms of democratic accountability.

The findings in respect of Private Finance Initiatives and Public Private Partnerships perhaps point to the need for close monitoring of the long-term economic value of such arrangements.

The strong views expressed about the need for public sector culture change indicate that this should form part of any future staff development programme, particularly in the civil service.

Modernisation and Value for Money

There was thought to be considerable scope for enhancing value for money and effectiveness across the public sector by rationalising services, improving purchasing methods, combining common services and moving staff between sectors.

Any new arrangements would clearly need to incorporate mechanisms for constantly exploring opportunities for improving service to the public through more productive use of resources.

The predominant view among our interviewees was that Northern Ireland had too many councils (and councillors) and too many non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs). The most popular suggestion was that there should be a council for each county and one each for the cities of Belfast and Derry. This suggests a strong desire for administrative boundaries around areas with which people can easily identify. The benefits of such a model would, of course, have to be weighed against the difficulties of ensuring an appropriate balance of representation across the Province.

1 INTRODUCTION

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW AND CONTEXT FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT

The Review of Public Administration has its roots in the political agreement of 18th December 1998. The purpose of the Review is to develop a system of public administration that fully meets the needs of the people of Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Executive Committee's commitment to the Review was confirmed in Section 7.5 of the Programme For Government and the extent of that commitment is reflected in the statement made by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister on 12 February:

“The Review of Public Administration is a major undertaking to which the Executive will devote a lot of time and effort to ensure proposals come forward which are coherent and designed to improve the service delivered to the citizen.”

The Review was launched in June 2002 and is being carried out by a team of officials within the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister whose work is supported by a panel of six independent experts. Following the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Executive on 14 October 2002, the Secretary of State confirmed that while decisions on the outcome of the Review would be a matter for a devolved government, the work of the Review team should continue.

The Review Team has completed an extensive round of pre-consultation meetings with key stakeholders, including meetings with all 26 councils, health boards, education boards and numerous other public bodies. This exercise was designed to give people in these organisations the opportunity to discuss important issues in relation to public administration, service delivery and accountability.

In addition to these meetings, the Review Team also commissioned a series of research briefing papers from leading academics on public service reform, multi-level governance, accountability, quality of service, subsidiarity, the role of semi-state bodies, partnerships and e-government.

This research by RES and Associates is one of a number of exercises commissioned by the Review Team, which include further briefing papers and a service mapping exercise. All of this activity is being carried out within very compressed timescales in order to support the Review Team's commitment to publish a document setting out key issues and considerations for consultation in spring 2003.

3.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND KEY ISSUES

The overall purpose of this research is to inform the Review in relation to "*the views, attitudes and opinions of the public on the provision of public services in Northern Ireland*".

The terms of reference required RES and Associates to undertake the following three tasks:

- (I) *To identify **key providers and users of public services** in NI covering the public, voluntary and community sectors.*
- (II) *To conduct **structured interviews** with those persons identified at objective (I) and to address the relevant key issues.*
- (III) *To provide **interim and final reports**, including tables and explanatory diagrams where appropriate, within the agreed costs and timescales.*

The Review Team had identified a series of key issues to be covered which were based on the Review Terms of Reference as well as key themes which emerged from the pre-consultation. In summary, the key issues relate to:

- Democratic Accountability;
- Equality, Human Rights and New TSN;
- Quality of Service;
- Co-ordination of Services;
- Scope of the Public Sector and Partnership Working

- Modernisation and Value for Money. (See Appendix A.)

1 METHODOLOGY

2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

RES and Associates conducted ninety² (structured interviews) – forty seven key provider interviews and forty three key user interviews. Due to the compressed timescales for the conduct of the research, the vast majority of the interviews were conducted by telephone (thirty six out of forty seven - providers; thirty six out of forty three – key users). Just over one fifth (22%) were conducted face to face. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Section 3.2 below explains in more detail how the structured interviews were conducted.

2.0 APPROACH TO THE CONDUCT OF THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

RES and Associates worked with the Review Team and identified fifty key user and fifty key provider contacts across the public service in Northern Ireland. Key users and key providers were individuals who would be likely to have views, informed by their respective experiences, about the design and delivery of public services. Key users were drawn from non-statutory organisations, many of which play an important role in promoting the interests of particular client groups. Key providers were drawn from statutory and voluntary organisations that deliver public services.

Our first step was to identify which sectors within the public service needed to be represented. For convenience, we used the main central government departments as themes. Using a variety of databases, and following discussions with the Review Team, we developed two lists – one for key users and one for key providers. The entries on each list spanned the sectoral themes and represented a mix of statutory and non-statutory as well as urban/rural organisations. (Appendix B contains the list of key users. Appendix C contains the list of key providers).

² The original intention had been to conduct one hundred interviews but, given the compressed timescales for this project, regrettably, not all of those we identified as potential interviewees were available for interview.

RES and Associates worked with the Review team to develop a list of questions for key users and key providers. These are included in Appendices D and E respectively.

All efforts were made to secure an interview with the most senior member of staff or a deputy within each of the key user or provider organisations. Of the organisations selected, ten were unable to accommodate our request for an interview in the necessary timescale.

The quality of the conduct and documentation of these interviews was safeguarded in three ways:

- By the calibre and experience of the personnel undertaking the interviews.
- The fact that RES staff were also undertaking a significant proportion of the interviews and were able to check for consistency in terms of the overall emerging themes.
- By conducting a number of interviews on a face-to-face basis and subsequently comparing outcomes with those conducted by telephone. This provided assurance that telephone interviews were no less comprehensive than those carried out face-to-face.

3 MAIN FINDINGS

4.0 DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Under this heading we sought views on the role of elected representatives in influencing local public services; on the extent to which they thought that local elected representatives should be members of public bodies; on the extent to which organisations provided information about aspects of service delivery and addressed local people's needs; and about whether it was desirable or feasible to transfer the responsibility for the delivery of some services to a more local level.

The Role of Local Elected Representatives

***Q** What do you think should be the role of local elected representatives in influencing the way in which local public services are delivered?*

- Most providers felt that, at the very least, councils should have more influence over the way in which services were delivered in their areas, with only a minority suggesting that their range of responsibilities should remain as at present. Many, however, also saw an increased role for voluntary and community organisations, and staff representative bodies in working with elected representatives to influence planning and delivery of local services.
- The majority of users, and some providers, were generally more reluctant to suggest an expanded role for councils, with many expressing doubts about the competence of local representatives and their capacity to cope with new responsibilities.
- Some providers and users saw the role of councils as influencing, directing, driving and co-ordinating local service delivery. It was generally felt that councils were well placed to convey a local perspective to service providers and to monitor standards of service delivery.
- Some providers suggested that local representatives should have a decision-making responsibility in relation to services with a particularly local dimension rather than just an influencing one. For example, councils would have responsibility for maintaining minor roads and pavements whereas the maintenance of main arterial routes would remain the responsibility of the

Roads Service. In essence, councils would have the power to make things happen at a local level, and would be held accountable by the electorate when things did not!

- One other provider described the role of councils as facilitating the process of developing a strategic vision for their areas, set in the context of an overarching macro vision expressed through the Programme for Government. Local health, environment, education and other partnerships would be responsible for translating these strands of the vision into action and councils would be accountable to their electorate for progress towards achieving the vision. Membership of the partnerships would comprise a combination of service providers and users who would be selected on the basis of competence. Cohesion across the partnerships would be achieved through an integrated planning process.

Membership of Public Bodies

***Q** To what extent do you think that local elected representatives should be members of public bodies (such as the Health Boards)? What proportion of the places on those Boards should they occupy?*

- Many thought that public bodies should comprise an amalgam of elected representatives, appointed laypersons and professionals, with elected representatives occupying 40% of places. Some commended the constitution of the new District Policing Partnerships³ and others the Probation Board as good models and supported the concept of competence-based selection of laypersons.
- There was one suggestion that elected representatives should be in a majority on public bodies but that political parties should be required to ensure that their nominees could demonstrate a good understanding of the issues in relation to the service in question.
- Some providers referred to the experience in the Republic of Ireland where elected members held a majority of places on Health Boards, which was felt to

³ However, we would stress that those who made these remarks were commenting on the characteristics of the District Policing Partnerships in terms of their composition. We are aware that, at the time of writing, these structures are not yet established.

result in parochial vision and a delay in strategic decisions. They therefore felt it inappropriate that elected representatives should be members of such bodies here.

- A contrary view was expressed that local councillors on public bodies could rise above parochial thinking and would help to legitimise decisions. Many users favoured this view, giving a greater role to local elected representatives as members of public bodies, but not as a majority. It was suggested that induction programmes for elected representatives could increase awareness and understanding of the bigger picture.
- One provider expressed the view that it was wrong to suggest that the appointment of some councillors to public bodies achieved local representation in itself. This individual suggested that a mechanism be created to ensure that public bodies could take account of the views of councils, rather than those of individual councillors.
- A minority view from among users and providers suggested that local councillors should not be members of public bodies at all and that instead such bodies should comprise representatives of local communities and trades unions together with the professionals with responsibility for delivering the services. Under this scenario it was suggested that democratic accountability would be secured through the Assembly. Some users added that local representatives were best representing their constituents from outside the system i.e. if they were not members of the public bodies concerned.
- There were some users and providers who felt that as a consequence of the Review there would likely be a considerable reduction in the current range of public bodies (as they are presently constituted) in any future model of public administration. Consequently, they perceived the question of representation as academic.

Q *What do you think should be the future role of non-elected representatives on public bodies?*

- Some providers felt that a proportion of appointed members on public bodies brought useful expertise from the private sector and the professions, which could be of particular value to Audit Committees.

- It was also suggested that appointed members could come from specialist voluntary organisations representing client groups such as people with disabilities. As one in five people in Northern Ireland are disabled, they needed their voices to be heard, as did other marginalized groups such as the elderly.

Responsibility for Delivery and Complaints

***Q** To what extent do you think organisations that deliver public services make efforts to ensure that the public know:*

- *who is responsible for their delivery? (i.e. providing information on their services)*
 - *to whom they should complain when things go wrong?*
- In terms of the current arrangements, many providers felt that their organisations had become much more effective in providing information about services and complaints procedures in recent years. A number attributed this success to the discipline imposed by the ‘Best Value’ initiative, which required regular consultation with customers.
 - In contrast, other providers felt that much more could be done in this direction and observed that organisations engaged in a lot of uncoordinated activity that generated little of value to the public. Their view was that the public needed information presented in a more holistic and accessible form and in a timely manner. Most users felt this way too.
 - Whilst acknowledging that many organisations had made more efforts in recent years to provide information on services, most users felt this had been to limited effect. For example, in their opinion, it was not enough to print and distribute leaflets – they could seldom be found when they were needed. One user commented that if leaflets were to be used, they were most useful if they were located at the point of service delivery.
 - Another user emphasised the current difficulties and pointed out that organisational structures were invariably too complicated for the person in the street to grasp. Whilst it may not be essential for the person in the street to fully understand the structures within public service organisation, this user was referring to the immense frustration of being passed from pillar to post in an effort to try to identify the “correct” person to complain to. They felt that

some knowledge of the structures could get around this problem. In their opinion, it was only when a member of the public had a problem would they start trying to navigate the system, often with little knowledge of the structures or processes. This approach was frustrating.

Q *What would represent good practice?*

- In terms of good practice, some users and providers thought that the Next Steps Agencies were best at providing information about services. Many users and providers commended the efforts of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in this regard.
- Some users suggested that larger organisations should have a telephone helpline, preferably manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Many users and providers suggested a role for councils – already being pursued by some – in providing a ‘first-stop shop’ facility which would represent a single point of contact to be used by the public in seeking information or making complaints about public services.
- Others thought that the Internet could be better exploited for this purpose, preferably using a single website with links to all service providers; or more radio stations could regularly provide public service information.
- A small number of users and providers pointed to the limitations of ICT as a medium for providing information on public services. They referred to the “digital divide” (ie the low level of computer ownership particularly amongst the most disadvantaged social groups in society) and the high levels of illiteracy in Northern Ireland compared with Great Britain. Any move to provide information through IT as the main medium could risk marginalising such groups even further and caution was needed.

Addressing Local Needs

Q *To what extent do you think that organisations make efforts to ensure that the services provided address local people’s needs?*

- Many providers felt that their organisations were effective in addressing and responding to local needs, through exercises such as customer surveys and

focus groups. Again, it was pointed out by some that the ‘Best Value’ initiative required participating organisations to conduct regular surveys for this purpose.

- Most users, on the other hand, felt that providers did not make enough efforts to respond to local needs and many criticised the plethora of recent consultation exercises as cosmetic attempts to obtain public opinion. Some users suggested that public sector staff needed to develop new skills in consultation and criticised organisations for their failure to establish new and innovative ways to engage in genuine consultation.
- Some providers considered that Health and Social Services (HSS) Boards and Trusts were conducting consultation exercises better than before, particularly in relation to developing community care.
- Whilst providers believed that the mission of a Community HSS Trust was to meet local need, they felt that the arrival of the Assembly and a local Minister had introduced a “top down” agenda. Consequently, some providers now perceived that HSS Trusts felt compelled to respond to the Minister’s wishes, which could be at odds with expressed local needs.

Transferring Responsibility to Local Government

***Q** To what extent do you think it is desirable and feasible to transfer responsibility for the delivery of services that are currently administered at a regional or sub-regional level to local government?*

- The majority of users and providers were not in favour of transferring responsibility for the delivery of services to local government in its current form. (See further user comments below.) As we indicated earlier, most of the support was for an enhanced role for councils in influencing services and holding providers to account for standards.
- Some providers were in favour of transferring some responsibilities, such as housing, planning and community health and social services to fewer councils operating on a sub-regional basis.
- Some of those who advocated the transfer of responsibilities suggested that as much as possible should be transferred to improve local accountability. A number proposed that services which were local in nature or which could be

adjusted to allow for local variations in the way they were delivered would be the best candidates for transfer. Youth services, library services and the maintenance of minor roads were cited as examples.

- Some users and providers made their proposals for the transfer of responsibilities conditional upon the creation of fewer but larger councils, in which circumstances they felt that responsibility for housing, planning, fire services, urban and minor roads could be transferred.
- Some users thought that if more functions were delegated to councils the latter would attract a better calibre of councillor. They favoured the principle of democratic governance, and the incremental delegation of responsibilities to new multi-functional councils.
- In terms of specific services, a number of providers felt that health services were in need of urgent structural reform. Some favoured a single commissioning authority, with fewer Trusts while others suggested a single tier of health bodies, with a small management board and a wider stakeholder council.
- Finally, some providers thought that responsibilities should not be devolved further purely as a matter of principle. It would be important first to identify what structures were necessary to govern a population of little more than one and a half million people, and thereafter to allow form to follow function.

1.0 EQUALITY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND NEW TSN

Under this heading we sought views on how these issues should be addressed by the Review.

***Q** In your opinion, what are the equality, New TSN and Human Rights issues that need to be addressed by the Review?*

- The majority of users and providers responded to this question by commenting on the implementation implications of the policies and legislation rather than considering the implications of these for the Review. One user, however, stressed that if the Review resulted in improved access to services, it would be essential to ensure that access was improved equally for all.
- A number of providers suggested that where access to services was the issue, equity was a more appropriate consideration than equality.
- There was a general view among users and providers that the requirements of Section 75 had created a bureaucratic nightmare in which the underlying principles had been lost in box-ticking exercises. In spite of this, some thought that there would still be a substantial long-term benefit from the legislation. They perceived that progress on equality and human rights was a journey and not the “flick of a switch”. Indeed, some users felt that Section 75 had brought a new readiness for dialogue on equality from public bodies.
- One provider felt that there needed to be more ‘joined up’ New TSN with a greater focus on outcomes rather than inputs. Others questioned the basis for defining ‘need’ in the context of New TSN.
- Two groups were highlighted as requiring more consideration in an equality context: the disabled and the elderly. For the former, it was pointed out that equality of access was still very patchy. As to the elderly, it was suggested that health care decisions were often discriminatory, reflecting an attitude that the elderly were a burden on society.
- Some users felt that smaller public bodies had greater difficulty handling minority groups. For example, it was suggested that councils were tempted to “export” Travellers rather than meet their needs.

- It was suggested that the Review should highlight the need for community education in the Section 75 legislation in order to make it fully effective.
- One user suggested that any new structures needed to address key cross-departmental policies like anti-sectarianism and anti-poverty in a joined-up way.
- Another user suggested that the Review should make it clear how Departments and other public bodies should work together to achieve better outcomes for vulnerable client groups.

2.0 QUALITY OF SERVICE

Under this heading we asked people for their opinions on the effectiveness of quality initiatives; on improving access to services; and on the handling of complaints by organisations that deliver public services.

Quality Initiatives

***Q** How helpful or useful do you think the various quality initiatives (for example EFQM, Best Value) are in improving quality in service delivery?*

- It was generally thought, both by users and providers, that the various quality initiatives had been beneficial in terms of stimulating greater customer awareness. It was stressed by most, though, that regardless of what initiative was used it had to be integrated into a longer-term process of continuous improvement.
- Many providers had participated in the 'Best Value' initiative and most, while recognising that it had some weaknesses, claimed that it had generated tangible benefits in terms of reducing costs and improving responsiveness to the public's needs. Evidence of the latter was gathered through regular surveys.
- Many users and providers praised the benefits of 'Investors In People' (IIP) because of the rigour of the process and the fact that it required information systems and complaints procedures to be in place. Such initiatives appeared to engender a customer-orientated culture change within organisations which was sustained. IIP was seen as helping to give people a pride in what they did and to instil a will to remove the causes for complaints.
- However, in contrast, some users regarded the various quality initiatives as merely 'cost-cutting' exercises and suggested that there was often a big gap between the rhetoric of improved service quality and the reality.

***Q** Do you know of any circumstances where there have been real and tangible improvements which have resulted in benefits to the public?*

- Some users commended the **Northern Ireland Audit Office** for its role in monitoring compliance with standards and suggested that their findings should be more easily accessible to the public. Once again the **Northern Ireland Housing Executive** received praise from providers and users alike for its efforts to improve service quality. In particular, its Community Involvement Framework was seen as representing an excellent model for involving communities in discussing and developing services. Finally, some users and providers thought that the **Next Steps Agencies**, and in particular those linked to the Department of Regional Development, had been most successful in using quality initiatives to improve standards in service delivery.

Public Awareness of Quality Standards

***Q** To what extent do you think that the public is aware of the quality standards that are in place?*

- Neither users nor providers felt that the public was aware of, or for that matter, really cared about the various quality standards. One user pointed out that it was not possible to measure every aspect of public service. There was a strong sense that people judged organisations and the quality of the services they provided on the basis of their individual experiences.
- Some users, however, felt that quality standards could be better publicised. They felt that if this were done, user representatives could use them to judge services and press for standards where these were not yet in place.

Improving Access to Public Services

***Q** Are there new / different ways that you think would improve access to public services (for example, one-stop shops)?*

- Many users and providers supported the concept of one-stop shops as a convenient form of access to services. Some, however, refined this to mean first-stop shops, which would represent a single point of contact between the public and the whole gamut of service providers. Most thought that local councils would be best placed to provide this service and some observed that a number of councils had already gone some way towards doing this.
- Some thought there was scope for cooperation between the councils and existing advisory services like Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) in providing first-stop shops. However, it was perceived that these were struggling to survive and should be publicly core-funded from a single source.
- Many felt that there was scope for further exploitation of electronic service delivery and an example was cited of a Further Education College where some students could enrol electronically and complete their courses using distance-learning technology.
- It was also felt that there should be a comprehensive e-government strategy for Northern Ireland, embracing every facet of the public sector.
- One approach proposed, drawn from the United States, was that every public office should be equipped to deal with queries on all services and take action on them either directly or by reference to the appropriate agency.
- Some users pointed to radio as a useful medium, particularly for the housebound. They felt that radio stations should have a public information role and use experts to talk about new initiatives or highlight new services and initiatives.
- Others users pointed to the value of 'outreach' facilities which brought services and information to places where people naturally congregated, like shopping or entertainment centres.
- Another user suggested that specific client groups, eg homeless people, could be better served by the provision of a range of services at their hostels.

Awareness of Complaints Procedures

Q *To what extent do you think that organisations that deliver public services make efforts to ensure that the public is aware of their complaints procedures (recognising that there is a link here to the earlier question in relation to accountability)? In your opinion, what would represent good practice?*

- Although many providers thought that they had improved and clarified their complaints procedures in recent years the general feeling among users and providers was that complaints procedures were too cumbersome and were off-putting for the ordinary citizen who wanted to make a complaint.
- One user felt that organisations had become more responsive to complaints as a result of devolution and that people were more inclined to pursue their complaints through their local MLAs.
- One provider suggested that complaints were more prevalent in organisations that were least accountable to the local community, like the Health Boards, than in those that were most accountable, like the councils.
- The Royal Group of Hospitals and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive were mentioned as examples of good practice in terms of handling complaints.

Using Complaints to Improve Services

Q *When people do complain, to what extent do you think organisations take account of these complaints in helping to improve future development of services?*

- Many providers considered that whilst systems were in place to record complaints there was still a need for organisations to engage in systematic reviews of complaints and to identify areas which needed attention in terms of service delivery and quality.
- Most users thought that in responding to complaints, organisations applied too much effort to defending themselves rather than using the complaint to improve services.
- A small number of users commented on the low level of confidence that they had in providers' track record in using individual complaints to improve service delivery. Because of this perceived failure in "the system", such users

felt it was necessary to resort to alternative strategies such as collating reports based on several similar complaints and bringing these reports to the attention of the media. They perceived that this approach often achieved “results”.

- One user suggested that there should be a separate “comments” system, as in some hotels and restaurants. Many people did not want to make a formal complaint, but their comments, good or bad, would nonetheless be useful to management.

3.0 CO-ORDINATION OF SERVICES

Under this heading we sought views on how the absence of common geographical boundaries among public bodies might affect service delivery.

Common Boundaries

***Q** In your opinion, does the fact that public bodies do not have common boundaries create problems for the public in accessing services?*

- Most users and providers felt that the absence of common boundaries among public bodies created more problems for service providers than for the public in accessing services.
- Some users thought that it could be an obstacle to achieving ‘joined-up’ service delivery while others thought that it caused confusion for the public.

***Q** To what extent do you think it creates problems for the bodies themselves in administering those services?*

- Some providers felt that it created difficulties for organisations trying to collate statistics for comparisons between areas (eg in trying to develop a cohesive statement of needs for a specific geographical area which crossed different organisational boundaries)
- There was also a view among some providers that different boundaries presented problems in co-ordinating services across a range of different bodies.
- One provider pointed to the impact of different boundaries on emergency planning. For example, responding to major flooding could involve several agencies within different operational areas.

***Q** Do you think that all administrative boundaries should be the same?*

- Total co-terminosity was thought to be impractical and indeed unnecessary. Some of those interviewed took the view that co-terminosity was beneficial only where services required close and regular co-operation.
- A small number of users and providers considered that reducing the number of bodies would reduce the problem. Again, a few suggested that the boundary issue served to support the argument in favour of transferring more responsibilities to councils, a process which would inevitably result in common boundaries.

4.0 SCOPE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Under this heading we asked for views on different models for delivering public services and about the ability of the public sector to cope with major change.

Different Possibilities for delivering Public Services

***Q** What scope is there for delivering public services in different ways (for example, strategic partnerships, transferring responsibilities to the private/voluntary sector, public private partnerships)?*

- Most users and many providers felt that there was considerable scope for greater use of all the models suggested. The key was to ensure that services could be delivered to the required standards and that they represented value for money, regardless of who had responsibility for their delivery.
- Many users felt that statutory providers did not understand the true concept of partnership working. Where statutory providers entered into so-called partnerships with voluntary and community groups, users from such groups often perceived themselves as being regarded as lesser partners. In their opinion, partnerships would only be effective if all partners were treated as equals.
- While some users thought that the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP), established under the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation were effective, others thought they were not. Some providers suggested that this was because LSPs were not properly integrated with the existing decision-making framework and therefore lacked an appropriate powerbase.
- One provider observed that it was inappropriate for any body that did not have a mandate to be disbursing public money.
- It was pointed out by some providers that a large sector of the health services – services provided by general practitioners – had always been in the private sector. It was felt that contracting out hospital support services to the private sector had generally worked well, albeit with a few instances of poor performance.
- Similarly, most residential and nursing home care was now in the private and voluntary sector and standards were now secured by regulation and inspection.

- Many providers and users urged caution about involving the private sector in the delivery of services. They were concerned that the ethos of profit making would adversely affect service costs and service quality.
- In a similar vein, while providers and users supported the concept of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and Public Private Partnerships (PPP), many providers and some users cautioned that these schemes were still very much in their infancy. They contended that these initiatives were not yet proven in terms of value for money in the long-term.
- One user suggested that there was a constant need to look well beyond the neighbouring jurisdictions to identify and assess models of delivery that worked elsewhere.

Keys to Change

Q *What arrangements need to be made to ensure that the public sector is capable of coping with major change and what are the priorities amongst these?*

- Some providers and users suggested that the public sector had demonstrated considerable ability to cope with change in the way in which it had managed the introduction of devolution and subsequent reversions to direct rule.
- The majority of users, however, felt there was an urgent need for culture change in the public sector, where, it was claimed, staff had been working in a “comfort zone”.
- Users and providers both suggested that change in the Civil Service could best be achieved through the recruitment and secondment of staff from the wider public sector, and the voluntary and community sectors.
- Some providers suggested that there needed to be a ‘whole public sector’ approach to the training and recruitment of staff, with more mechanisms to allow for the movement of people from local to central government and vice-versa. This would allow for greater cross-fertilisation of ideas and would serve to enrich the cultures of all the organisations concerned.
- It was suggested that the Review should first outline a vision for success for ‘Northern Ireland PLC’. The prime requirement would then be the development of an overall change strategy, with senior officers given a choice

of routes to opt into the change or opt out through a retirement or redundancy package.

- One provider suggested that once civil servants had set the strategy, local consortia of senior officers should implement it to give committed leadership and ownership. This would require investment for staff development and re-skilling.
- Some users complained that the closer scrutiny of local public expenditure by the Assembly Public Accounts Committee had increased ‘risk aversion’ among civil servants, which was likely to stifle innovation.

5.0 MODERNISATION AND VALUE FOR MONEY

Under this heading we sought views on how value for money could be improved; how the Review might best balance some key characteristics of service delivery; and the extent to which we were over-governed and over-administered.

Improving Value for Money

***Q** How could we improve value for money in public service delivery – in other words, how do we get more from the current level of resources?*

- Many providers indicated that they were familiar with the drive for better value. They considered that whilst a lot of action had been taken there was still plenty of scope for improving value for money.
- Users and providers thought that there must be scope for generating considerable savings by combining common services within and between authorities, with human resources, accounting and purchasing cited as examples. The Republic of Ireland and Scotland were said to be creating models of good practice in this area. They felt it would be important, however, to establish that chief officers did not hand control of these common services to another authority, but retained ownership and local access. A joint board with out-posted staff was suggested as one way to manage this.
- Some providers suggested that we were still on the “nursery slopes” of regional purchasing, and that there was great potential for common contracts, again with local draw-down access.
- Some users suggested that there was a requirement for a co-ordinated IT strategy across the entire public sector but cautioned that the development of new electronic service delivery mechanisms should run apace with, rather than ahead of the incidence of public use of this medium.

Balancing Characteristics

Q *In your view, what are the issues for the Review in balancing the characteristics of efficiency, effectiveness, quality of service, and responsiveness for the purpose of proposing new arrangements for public administration in NI?*

- Most users and providers found this question difficult to answer in the context of a relatively brief interview.
- Some suggested that the overall aim should be to secure more effective services responsive to needs. Efficiency savings should not, therefore be the prime objective of the Review and it had to be recognised that reorganisation would cost in the short term.
- Some users added ‘accessibility’ and ‘inclusiveness’ to the characteristics quoted.
- A small number of users added that staff morale needed to be protected especially during any transition from the current arrangements. They alluded to the low levels of morale across public services at present; the fire service, the health service, the education service and the police service were mentioned specifically.
- Some suggested that, in the final analysis, the question of balance would be a matter to be addressed by the politicians who had ownership of the Review.
- Many users placed the emphasis on quality and responsiveness but others pointed out that the key would be to establish the appropriate level of resources for all public services.

Over-Governed?

Q *Finally, in your opinion, to what extent do you think that we are over-governed and over-administered?*

- Apart from one provider who suggested that reducing representation was not necessarily a good thing, responses to this question from both users and providers varied only between “hugely and substantively”.
- People were generally of the view that we did not need so many councils, or five Education and Library Boards or four Health and Social Services Boards.

- For Health and Personal Social Services, a suggested model was for one regional commissioning authority, not more than six Hospital Trusts and six Community Trusts, with the Department setting strategy and policies and supporting the Minister in accounting to the Assembly.
- Models for councils varied from one for each county with additions to cover Derry and Belfast cities, to new council areas to match the parliamentary election boundaries.
- Some users suggested that in reducing the number of councils there should not necessarily be a corresponding reduction in the number of councillors: the key would be to retain an appropriate level of representation at local levels.
- One provider stressed that no matter what new model of public administration were to be proposed by the Review it would be essential to take decisions quickly to avoid a protracted period of uncertainty, which could only serve to demoralise the staff concerned.
- Another provider suggested that the Review had a unique opportunity to aim for the best even if our reach exceeded our grasp, and to create for our small region a model which would set an example for the rest of Europe.

APPENDIX A

INITIAL SET OF KEY ISSUES

Appendix A – Key Issues

Democratic accountability

- **What are people’s understanding of / views on accountability and the structures for it in NI?**
- **What are people views on / knowledge of the current structures of government in NI?**
- Is change necessary – if so, what changes should be made?
- Do people think we are over-governed / administered?
- Who do people think should be held accountable for their public services?
- To what extent should local government be delegated more powers?
- What are people’s views on the processes for appointments to public bodies?

Community responsiveness and partnership working

- **What are people’s views on the responsiveness of local government and public bodies to community concerns?**
- **Is the “sense of community” issue important, and if so is it different for rural and urban communities?**
- **To what extent do people identify with their local councils?**
- **To what extent do people feel they can make a difference / impact on how services are delivered and decisions made?**
- **Do people feel that services should be more locally planned, delivered and organised?**

Cross community concerns

- **Do local government and public bodies in NI currently take enough account of the concerns of minority communities?**
- **If not, what can be done to improve the situation?**
- **To what extent are minorities treated fairly?**

Equality, human rights and New TSN

- **Do local government and public bodies in NI currently take enough account of equality and human rights issues?**
- **If not, what can be done to improve the situation?**
- **To what extent can all sectors of our community share equity of access to the necessary public services?**

Subsidiarity

- **Do people understand the concept of subsidiarity?**
- **Are the services, which are currently delivered and managed by local government and public bodies, being delivered at the appropriate level, (i.e. local, sub-regional and regional)?**
- **Is there scope for / rationale for change?**
- **Should powers / functions currently with public bodies be transferred to local or central government?**

Quality and Service

- **How satisfied are the public with the quality of government/public administration in NI?**
- **Are the quality standards and measures that are currently in place clear and appropriate?**

- **What are people's experiences of excellent or poor quality public services?**
- **What are people's experiences of contact with local government and public bodies, e.g. via complaints procedures?**

Integration of services

- **Are services delivered in a co-ordinated way?**
- **Is there scope for examining the geographical units in which service delivery organised?**
- **Are there certain services where integration is more important?**
- **How can integration of services be improved?**

Scope of the public sector

- **Is it appropriate for the public sector in NI to deliver the services that it does?**
- **Is it appropriate for the private or community/voluntary sectors to take a greater role in the delivery of services?**
- **Are there certain services in which the private, community or voluntary sectors could or should play a greater role?**

Efficiency and effectiveness

- **Are local government and public bodies in general in NI as efficient and effective as they could be?**
- **Do local government and public bodies provide good value for money?**
- **If not, what improvements could/should be made?**

INNOVATION AND BUSINESS

- **Are local government and public bodies in general in NI as forward looking and innovative as they could be?**
- **Could the public sector make more use of IT?**
- **What innovations would the public like to see in how services are delivered?**

Flexibility

- **Is flexibility in local government important?**
- **Are current structures of local government flexible enough to deal with the challenges of the future?**
- **How can they be made more flexible?**

Affordability

- **How can we best strike a balance between improved delivery of services and affordability?**
- **To what extent would you be willing to pay more if services were clearly of higher quality and more accessible?**

Co-terminosity

- **Do people understand the concept of co-terminosity?**
- **What are people's experiences of accessing services in areas which are served by bodies covering different geographical boundaries?**
- **Would shifting geographical boundaries improve access to services?**

APPENDIX B

LIST OF KEY USERS

Clarke Black	Chief Executive	Ulster Farmers Union
Sean Clarke	Chairman	NI Agricultural Producers Association
Eamon James McCaffery	Chief Executive	Ulster Deaf Sports Council
Nelson McAusland	Chief Executive	Ulster Scots Heritage Council
Mr Aodan Mac Poilin	Director	Ultach
Eileen Kelly	Director	Education Guidance Service for Adults
Stevie Johnston	Chief Executive	Workers Education Association
Ivor Mitchell	Chief Executive	City of Belfast YMCA
Celine McStravick	Chief Executive	Belfast Common Purpose
John Miskelly	Clerk of Governing Body	Governing Bodies Association (Vol Grammar)
Annie Moore	Director	Open College Network
Paddy Doherty	Chief Executive	Inner City Trust
Tommy Shaw	Executive Manager	Worknet Connections
Norma Shearer	Chief Executive	NI Training for Women Network NI Ltd
Anthony McQuillan	Chief Executive	Conservation Volunteers
D C Bleakley	Chief Executive	Belfast Community Housing Association
Brian Coulter	Chief Executive	Fold Headquarters
Mary McKee	Chief Executive	Groundwork NI
Jean Fulton	Chief Executive	BIH
Bryan Miles	Chief Executive	Community Transport Association
Nevin Ringland	Chief Executive	Praxis
Ian Elliott	Chief Executive	NSPCC
Susan Reid	Chief Executive	Royal National Institute for the Blind
Helen Ferguson	Chief Executive	National Carers Association
Monica Wilson	Chief Executive	Disability Action
Noel Graham	Chief Executive	Northern HSS Council
Jane Graham	Chief Officer	EHSS Council
Delia van der Lenden	Chief Officer	SHSS Council
Stanley Millar	Chief Officer	Western Health & Social Services Council
Louise Wardehunter	Chief Executive	Action Cancer
Andrew Dougal MBE	Chief Executive	NI Chest, Heart & Stroke Association
Tom Cairns	Chief Executive	Age Concern
Evelyn Collins	Chief Executive	Equality Commission
Caroline Coleman	Acting Chief Officer	Multi - Cultural Resource Centre
Frank Guckian	Director	Chamber of Commerce
John Heaslip	Director	Business in the Community
Jo Eagleson	Director	Enterprise Ulster
Brian Holmes	Chief Executive	NI Tenants Action Project
Ricky Rowledge	Chief Executive	Council for the Homeless
Bob Strong	Chief Executive	Association of Independent Advice Services
William Patterson	Chief Executive	Labour Relations Agency
Bill Osbourne	Chief Executive	NI Council for Voluntary Action
Avila Kilmurray	Chief Executive	NI Voluntary Trust

APPENDIX C

LIST OF KEY PROVIDERS

Ms Roisin McDonough, Chief Executive, Arts Council 77 Malone Road, BELFAST 7
Ms Heather Floyd, Director, Community Arts Forum 15 Church Street, BELFAST, BT1 1PG
Eamonn McCartan, Chief Executive, Sports Council House of Sport, Malone Road, BELFAST
Mr David Cargo, Chief Executive, BELB 40 Academy Street, BELFAST, BT1 2NQ
Mr Gordon Topping, Chief Executive, NEELB County Hall, 182 Galgorm Road, BALLYMENA, BT42 1HN
Mr Jackie Fitzsimons, Chief Executive, SEELB The Grahamsbridge Road, Dundonald, Belfast, BT16 3HS
Mrs Helen McClenaghan, Chief Executive, SELB 3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, Armagh, BT61 9AX
Mr Joe Martin, Chief Executive, WELB 1 Hospital Road, OMAGH, BT79 0AW
Mr Michael Wardlow, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, 44 University Street BELFAST, BT7 1HB
Mr Donal Flanagan, Chief Executive, CCMS HQ 160 High Street, Holywood, BT18 9HT
Mr David Guilfoyle, Chief Executive, Forestview Purdys Lane, BELFAST, BT8 7AR
Mr Walter Rader, Director, YouthNet 7 James Street South, BELFAST, BT2 8DN
Mr Peter McNaney, Chief Executive, Belfast City Council City Hall, BELFAST, BT1 5GS
Miss Heather Moorhead, Chief Executive, NILGA 123 York Street, BELFAST, BT15 1AB
Mr John McConnell, (Acting CEO), Planning Service Clarence Court, 10 –18 Adelaide Street, BELFAST, BT2 8GB
Mr Michael McGuckin, Chief Executive, Cookstown District Council, Burn Road, Cookstown, BT80 8DT
Mr Adrian Kerr, Chief Executive 18 –20 Gordon Street, BELFAST, BT1 2LG
Mr Colm McGarry, Chief Executive, Larne Borough Council, Smiley Buildings, Victoria Road, Larne, Co Antrim, BT40 1RU
Dr Paula Kilbane, Chief Executive, EHSSB Champion House, 12 – 22 Linenhall Street, BELFAST, BT2 8BS
Mr Colm Donaghy, Chief Executive, SHSSB Tower Hill, Armagh, BT61 9DR
Mr Steven Lindsay, Chief Executive, WHSSB, Area Board Headquarters, 15 Gransha Park, Clooney Road Derry, BT47 6FN
Mr Stuart McDonnell, Chief Executive, Couty Hall 182 Galgorm Road, Ballymena, BT42 1QB
Mr Eamon Deane, Director, Holywell Trust, Bishop Street, Derry
Mrs Stella Burnside, Chief Executive Altnagelvin Hospitals HSS Trust Glenshane Road Londonderry, BT47 6SB
Mr William McKee, Chief Executive Royal Group of Hospitals, Grosvenor Road, Belfast, BT12
Mr Denis Preston, Chief Executive Craigavon & Banbridge Community HSS Trust Bannvale House, 10 Moyallen Road, Gilford, Co Down, BT63 5JX

Mr Paul McCormick, Chief Executive Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust Site 30, Knockbracken Health Care Park Saintfield Road, Belfast, BT8 8SG
Mr Colin Lammey , Chief Executive and Chief Fire Officer 1 Seymour Street, Lisburn, BT27 4SX
Mr S Matthews, Chief Executive, Cedar Foundation (NICOD), Malcolm Sinclair House, 31 Ulsterville Ave BELFAST, BT9 7AS
Ms Jo Marley , Chief Executive, Bryson House Family Services, 28 Bedford Street, BELFAST
Ms Anne O'Reilly, Chief Executive, Help the Aged Lesley House,Shaftsbury Square, BELFAST, BT2 7DB
Ms Sheri Chamberlain, Director , Save the Children Popper House, 15 Richmond Park, Finaghy BELFAST, BT10 0HB
Mr Hugh Mills, Chief Executive,Sperrin Lakeland H&SS Trust Strathdene House, Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital, Omagh BT79 0NS
Mrs Maureen Piggot , Director , Mencap 4 Annadale Ave, BELFAST, BT7 3JH
Mr John McGrillen, Chief Executive Down DC,24 Strangford Road Downpatrick, Co Down, BT30 6SR
Mr Danny McSorley, Chief Executive Omagh DC, The Grange, Mountjoy Road OMAGH, Co Tyrone, BT79 7BL
Mr Trevor Neilands , Acting Director Belfast Institute of Further & Higher Education Gerald Moag Campus, B1.L2.9 125 – 153 Millfield, BELFAST, BT1 1HS
Mr Brian Rouse, Director Fermanagh College, Fairview, 1 Dublin Road Enniskillen, BT74 6AE
Dr Johnston Price , Acting Director Ulster People's College, 30 Adelaide Park BELFAST, BT9 6FY
Mr John Hagan, Chief Executive Rivers Agency , Hydebank, 4 Hospital Road BELFAST, BT8 8JP
Mr Martin McDonald , Chief Executive 17 Loy Street, Cookstown , Co Tyrone N Ireland, BT80 8PZ
Mr Niall Fitzduff , Director 38a Oldtown Street, Cookstown, Co Tyrone BT80 8EF
Dr Malcolm McKibben , Chief Executive Roads Service, Room 702, Clarence Court 10 – 18 Adelaide Street, BELFAST, BT2 8GB
Mr Paddy McIntyre, Chief Executive, NIHE 2 Adelaide Street, BELFAST, BT2 8PB
Mrs Carol O Bryan , Director , Simon Community 57 Fitzroy Ave, BELFAST, BT7 I HT
Mr Derek Alcorn , Chief Executive Northern Ireland Citizens Advice Bureaux, 11 Upper Crescent BT7 1NT
Mr Les Allamby, Director, Belfast Law Centre 124 Donegall Street, BELFAST, BT1 2GY

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONS FOR KEY USERS

User Interviews

Final Questions

Democratic Accountability/Subsidiarity/Community Responsiveness and Partnership Working

What do you think should be the role of local elected representatives in influencing the way in which local public services are delivered?

To what extent do you think that local elected representatives should be members of public bodies (such as the Health Boards)? What proportion of the places on those Boards should they occupy? (Some local elected representatives have suggested that they should be in the majority on such Boards.)

What do you think should be the future role of non-elected representatives on public bodies?

To what extent do you think organisations that deliver public services make efforts to ensure that the public know:

- Who is responsible for their delivery?
- To whom they should complain when things go wrong?

Can you give me any examples of good practice that you have come across?

If you think that organisations could do more in this regard, what sort of things do you think they should be doing?

To what extent do you think that organisations make efforts to ensure that the services provided address local people's needs?

If you think that more could be done, what steps do you think should be taken?

To what extent do you think it is desirable and feasible to transfer responsibility for the delivery of services that are currently administered at a regional or sub-regional level to local government?

Cross Community, Equality, Human Rights and New TSN

In your opinion, what are the equality issues that need to be addressed by the Review of Public Administration Team?

In a similar vein, what issues in relation to New TSN do you think the Review should be addressing?

In your view, are there any Human Rights considerations that should be addressed by the Review?

Quality of Service

How helpful or useful do you think the various quality initiatives that are used by some organisations (for example EFQM, best value) are in improving quality in service delivery?

Do you know of any circumstances where there have been real and tangible improvements that have resulted in benefits to the public? Can you give me examples of actual benefits?

To what extent are you aware of any quality standards that have been adopted by organisations? Where standards are in place, to what extent do you think the organisations concerned do enough to ensure that they comply with those standards?

Are there new/ different ways in which public services could be delivered that would improve public access to them? (*for example, one-stop shops*)?

To what extent do you think that organisations that deliver public services make efforts to ensure that the public is aware of their complaints procedures (*recognising that there is a link here to the earlier question in relation to accountability*)? In your opinion, what would represent good practice?

When people do complain, to what extent do you think organisations take account of those complaints in improving the future development of services?

Coordination/Co-Terminosity

In your opinion, does the fact that public bodies do not have common boundaries create problems for you and other service users in accessing services?

If no, ask why not?

If yes, explore how services would benefit.

To what extent do you think it creates problems for the bodies themselves in administering those services?

Do you think that all administrative boundaries should be the same?

To what extent do you think that common boundaries would improve service delivery?

Scope Of The Public Sector

In your opinion, what scope is there for delivering public services in different ways (*for example, strategic partnerships, transferring responsibilities to the private/voluntary sector, public private partnerships*)?

PROMPT FOR EXAMPLES/ILLUSTRATIONS

In your opinion, what arrangements need to be made to ensure that the public sector is capable of coping with major change?

FOR EXAMPLE, IN TERMS OF CULTURE, COMPETENCE, SKILLS, RESOURCES AND STRUCTURES?

Which of these do you see as priorities?

Innovation and Business Organisation/ Efficiency and Effectiveness

In your opinion, how could administrators improve value for money in public service delivery – in other words, how could they get more from the current level of resources?

(Prompts: what is the potential of

- *IT*
- *Smart purchasing*
- *Greater staff efficiency*
- *Combining common services that are currently delivered separately across departments, agencies and other bodies, such as human resource management, finance/accounting etc.*

In your view, what are the issues for the Review in balancing the following characteristics in proposing new arrangements for public administration in Northern Ireland?

- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Quality of service
- Responsiveness

Finally, to what extent do you think we are over-governed and over-administered?

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONS FOR KEY PROVIDERS

Provider Interviews

Final Questions

Democratic Accountability/Subsidiarity/Community Responsiveness and Partnership Working

What do you think should be the role of local elected representatives in influencing the way in which local public services are delivered?

What about scrutiny?

To what extent do you think that local elected representatives should be members of public bodies (such as the Health Boards)? What proportion of the places on those Boards should they occupy? (Some local elected representatives have suggested that they should be in the majority on such Boards.)

What do you think should be the future role of non-elected representatives on public bodies?

To what extent do you think organisations that deliver public services make efforts to ensure that the public know:

- who is responsible for their delivery?
- and to whom they should complain when things go wrong?

Would you mind giving me a few examples where this has happened?

If you think not enough is being done, what steps do you think should be taken?

To what extent do you think that organisations make efforts to ensure that the services provided address local people's needs?

If you think not enough is being done, what steps do you think should be taken?

To what extent do you think it is desirable and feasible to transfer responsibility for the delivery of services that are currently administered at a regional or sub-regional level to local government?

Cross Community, Equality, Human Rights and New TSN

In your opinion, what are the equality issues that need to be addressed by the Review of Public Administration Team?

In a similar vein, what issues in relation to New TSN do you think the Review Team should be addressing?

In your view, are there any Human Rights considerations that should be addressed by the Review?

Quality of Service

How helpful or useful do you think the various quality initiatives (for example EFQM, Best Value) are in improving quality in service delivery?

Do you know of any circumstances where there have been real and tangible improvements which have resulted in benefits to the public?

How do you know?

To what extent do you think that the public is aware of the quality standards in place?

How do you know?

Are there new / different ways that you think would improve access to public services?
(for example, one stop shops)?

To what extent do you think that organisations that deliver public services make efforts to ensure that the public aware is aware of their complaints procedures (recognising that there is a link here to the earlier question in relation to accountability)? In your opinion, what would represent good practice?

When people do complain, to what extent do you think organisations take account of these complaints in helping to improve future development of services?

Coordination/Co-Terminosity

In your opinion, does the fact that public bodies do not have common boundaries create problems for the public in accessing services?

If say, no, ask why not?

If say, yes, explore how services would benefit

To what extent do you think it create problems for the bodies themselves in administering those services?

Do you think that all administrative boundaries should be the same?

To what extent do you think that common boundaries would improve service delivery

Scope Of The Public Sector

In your opinion, what scope is there for delivering public services in different ways (for example, strategic partnerships, transferring responsibilities to the private/voluntary sector, public private partnerships)?

PROMPT FOR EXAMPLES / ILLUSTRATIONS

In your opinion, what arrangements need to be made to ensure that the public sector is capable of coping with major change?

IE IN TERMS OF CULTURE, COMPETENCE, SKILLS RESOURCES AND STRUCTURES

Which of these of do you see as a priority issue?

Innovation and Business Organisation / Efficiency and Effectiveness

In your opinion, how could we improve value for money in public service delivery – in other words, how do we get more from the current level of resources?

Prompts: what is the potential of

- *IT*
- *Smart purchasing*
- *Greater staff efficiency*
- *Combining common services that are currently delivered separately across departments, agencies and other bodies, such as human resource management, finance/accounting etc.)*

In your view, what are the issues for the Review in balancing the following characteristics for the purpose of proposing new arrangements for public administration in NI?

- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Quality of service
- Responsiveness?

Finally, in your opinion, to what extent do you think that we over-governed and over-administered?