a policy agenda for the interface

Belfast
Interface
Project

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Background

This document calls for concerted, integrated, resourced and long term strategies to regenerate Belfast's interface areas. It is based on frustration amongst groups and people working in interface areas about the lack of support for their efforts, the perception of low priority given to interface communities within Government and the sense of abandonment experienced by some interface communities. There is recognition, however, that there have been efforts inside and outside Government and within and between interface communities to develop a positive approach to their regeneration and renewal. The ultimate aim of this document is to create a policy agenda that helps those communities which have been amongst those most affected by the conflict and who still live in fear and for many, poverty.

Why do we need this document?

This document has been prepared after consultation with a number of community groups in interface areas of Belfast, which highlighted a number of interconnected problems and issues:

1. There was a real sense of frustration about the perceived abandonment of interface communities especially by government. Groups felt isolated and unsupported and unable to develop any real sense of momentum in local development

2. Linked to this, groups saw many sporadic, ill thought-through or high publicity initiatives dealing with problems in isolated and unconnected ways. Crisis response rather than visionary planning seemed to characterise the treatment of the regeneration of interface communities

3. What groups wanted to see was evidence of effective policy and programme integration driven by cross-sectoral partnerships that involved all the key interests, but especially local people

4. Groups also pointed to the absence of a coherent conflict resolution strategy from official policy documents and local initiatives. This issue, they felt, had been marginalised and not given the resource treatment it clearly required

5. This has, in part, created a certain culture toward interface areas. The groups felt that residential segregation and intercommunity tensions were viewed negatively as problems to be solved with management solutions designed to minimise contact, rather than through a comprehensive approach that builds on positive community practices across the city

6. Groups pointed to many areas of good practice and initiatives that showed positive engagement in relation to the addressing of intercommunity conflict and the involvement of local people in local regeneration and development processes. However, many feel that, because this work is not valued sufficiently, their own long-term sustainability is always under threat. Groups felt that appropriate treatment of the regeneration of interface areas would ensure that these initiatives would be nurtured and have meaningful long-term impact. There is a recognition amongst interface community groups and activists that inter and intra community work in interface areas needs to be undertaken on a long-term basis and therefore requires a framework of support that will not prematurely disinvest in groups, people and skills already working in a difficult environment.

Ultimately, the frustration is that local groups cannot see where change will come from, how it might be resourced and how they can, effectively and sustainably, contribute to the long-term transformation of interface areas in a city coming out of conflict.

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What do we mean by an interface?

Interface areas in Belfast are not new and can be traced back to the time of the industrial revolution when a massive influx of Catholics and Protestants helped to create factory communities who felt safer congregated with their own tradition. At times of violence the boundaries between communities sharpened to create distinctive edges often, but not always, characterised by a physical barrier. It is in the most recent period of sustained conflict that physical interfaces have become a more obvious feature of the city's landscape and there are currently at least 27 Northern Ireland Office-built walls, fences or other physical barriers which mark the boundaries between Protestant/unionist and Catholic/nationalist communities in Belfast, with a further 10 in other areas of Northern Ireland.

NIO-BUILT INTERFACE BARRIERS, BELFAST

Ainsworth Avenue / Springfield Road (inc. Kirk St)
Malinmore Park / Oranmore Drive
Springfield Park / Springmartin Road (inc. Moyard)
Cupar Way / Clonard
Beverley Street / Ardmoulin Avenue
Roden Street / Distillery Street
Springhill Avenue / Springfield Road
Bryson Street / Thistle Court
Newtownards Road / Strand Walk
Mountpottinger Road / Woodstock Link
Cluan Place / Clandeboye Gardens
Duncairn Gardens / North Queen Street
Newington Avenue / Halliday's Road
Parkside Gardens / Mountcollyer Street (inc. Alexandra Park)
Manor Street / Rosevale Street
Rosapenna Street / Oldpark Road
Torrens / Oldpark Road
Torrens / Wyndham Street
Torrens / Oldpark Avenue
Alliance Avenue / Glenbryn Park
Crumlin Road / Flax Street
Serpentine Gardens / Gunnell Hill
Squires Hill / Hazel Brook Drive, Ligoniel
Mountainview Parade / Mountainview Park
Longlands Road / Arthur Bridge
Henry Street / Westlink
Woodvale / Holy Cross

It is important to remember that interfaces are not always physically demarcated in this way. An interface can be a solid brick wall 20 feet high, or a steel fence, or a road, or it may be unnoticeable to the outsider but local people know exactly where it is. It can be crossed simply by crossing a street, passing a landmark, or turning a corner. In Belfast, apart from those interfaces listed above, there are many more 'invisible' interfaces between communities. North Belfast, especially, is a 'patchwork quilt' of interface communities.

The Belfast Interface Project recognises three types of interface including:

Figure 1 - The enclave area - an 'island' community totally surrounded by 'other' communities such as Suffolk, Short Strand, Torr Heath or Bawnmore;

Figure 2 - The split, a wall or boundary evenly separating the two communities such as the Shankill/Springfield, the Westlink, or Ardoyne/Glenbryn interface;

Figure 3 - The buffer zone, a mixed community separating two different communities such as Ballynafeigh, Mid-Springfield or Mid-Skegoneill.

In short, just as Northern Ireland is characterised by residential segregation between unionists and nationalists, so it is characterised by the interfaces which often exist between these residential areas.

The definition below summarises our understanding of interfaces in the city.

An interface is a common boundary line between a predominantly Protestant/unionist area and a predominantly Catholic/nationalist area. An interface community is a community which lives alongside an interface. *Interface Communities and the Peace Process*, p. 4

What does this paper aim to do?

This paper has been prepared by the Belfast Interface Project in conjunction with a number of groups operating in interface areas across the city. It has three aims:

1. To identify the impact of interface area disadvantage on communities and the wider city

2. To highlight the need for a co-ordinated strategy that prioritises the regeneration of interface areas as a policy issue within Government

3. To set out how we might achieve change by building on good practice inside Government and within interface communities themselves.

The purpose of this section is to describe the principles or values that underpin our thinking on the development of a more comprehensive and long term development agenda for interface areas across the city.

Overall vision

The Belfast Interface Project's overall vision is of a Belfast in which interface communities:

• Are free of inter-community tension, intimidation and violence

• Have come to terms with the legacies of the past

• Are socially and economically vibrant, within an attractive physical environment

• Enjoy freedom of movement in accessing facilities and services.

Objectives

The objectives for the Policy Paper are therefore:

1. To explain why interface areas require distinctive policy treatment

2. To explore the policy progress that has been made in this area and identify best practice in the development and regeneration of interface areas

3. To highlight the need for appropriate governance structures inside and outside Government to manage comprehensive processes of change in interface areas

4. To describe the systems that may help all those with an interest in interface communities to work together to regenerate interface areas

5. To set out the skills and resources needed to advance the policy agenda and create a culture of mutual learning between communities, the voluntary sector and Government.

Challenge

What we would like to see are properly integrated strategies in interface areas that tackle each of the problems set out in our empirical analysis in Section 3. Local strategies should therefore as a minimum:

• Set out integrated actions to deal with the economic problems and opportunities experienced in interface areas

• Clearly connect interface communities to the development of social and environmental conditions within their areas

• Develop and deepen the capacities of individual communities to engage effectively in local development and inter-community dialogue in order to tackle the effects of the interface on life on both sides of the divide

• Describe and support activities that connect people from interface areas to training and employment opportunities located elsewhere in the urban economy

• Reduce and ultimately eliminate the violence and fear that conditions people's quality of life and the ways that people can feel trapped within their homes and communities

• Open opportunities for people to enjoy shopping, recreation and cultural services and facilities located outside their areas, efficiently but safely.

The purpose of this section is to explain why interface areas are relevant and important as a policy concern. In particular it highlights the interconnected nature of fear, economic decline and environmental blight that have made interface areas difficult to regenerate.

Understanding Interface Conflict

It is important to note that interface communities, generally, are the victims of violence to a greater extent than they are its perpetrators - violence is largely perpetrated from each interface's 'hinterland' community, while the interface community serves as a 'human shield' and front line of defence for that hinterland; i.e. interface communities are the site, rather than the sole source, of intercommunity violence (see diagram).
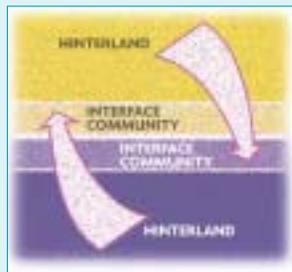
Residential segregation, in Belfast, while well researched, is only one spatial response to violence. Other spatial arenas, including places of consumption and production such as shops and workplaces, and their connections with residence, have been relatively neglected. Over-generalisations about Belfast as a whole often miss variations and spatial setting as determinants of violence. More importantly, it is evident that relationships between communities can change as a result of wider political and social processes. Some interface areas have, in recent years, been relatively 'quiet' whilst others have witnessed a process within which segregation has increased (i.e. Whitewell/White City).

Many analyses have treated interface conflict as a reflection of sectarianism and or 'tribalism' within interface communities. Such analyses undermine certain realities. Firstly, media driven reports fail to pinpoint that there is little evidence suggesting that people living in interface areas are any more sectarian than anyone else in our society today. Secondly, as noted earlier, elements from within 'hinterland' communities play a major role in interface violence. Thirdly, the reality that fear is a prevalent factor in the choice of workplaces, shops and other services has rarely been explored. Fear of the 'other' community does not necessarily mean that residents of communities who hold such fears are automatically sectarian. Fear is undoubtedly linked to an understanding of threat but this does not mean that residents, who refuse to enter areas perceived as dominated by the other ethno-religious group, interpret all people who live in such places as committed to harming them. It is also the case that many individuals regret that violence and residential separation produces greater polarisation between communities.

In interface areas, some people forego employment as well as access to facilities and services that are located in places perceived as dominated by the other ethno-religious group. In some instances people forego basic social services as they will not position themselves in sites that are located in areas perceived as dominated by the 'other' group. Investors have also moved out of interface areas due to the impact of violence.

Given the perpetuating effect of 'political violence' and civil disorder, critical questions have to be asked about the potential for socio-economic and cultural reconstruction of those communities affected by violence in a period of tentative 'peace'. The costs of violence can be felt in complex ways. Firstly, there are both individual and group costs. Secondly, there are socio-economic, cultural, political and psychological costs.

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More critically motivated analyses should acknowledge the complex effects of the restrictions, perceived to be placed upon access to a range of services, caused by fear of the 'other' community. They therefore ought to include group costs relating to consumption patterns, service provision, investment decisions and deprivation. The group social effects of violence are likely to be particularly important in a number of ways. The most fundamental of these is that the sundering of communities (and the creation of marginalised areas) has implications for the provision of services and public goods in disadvantaged areas in particular. This means that the differential impacts of violence by social class and location is likely to be a key theme in the Belfast Interface Project analysis.

Although significant numbers of residents who live in interface communities live in fear, the manner in which these fears and modes of victimhood are explained, expressed and understood is divergent. What ultimately emerges between the two (Protestant/unionist and Catholic/nationalist) communities are geographies of social and political separation. As the evidence below indicates there is a very distinct sense of localised forms of territorial control, avoidance and enhanced segregation.

Social exclusion and spatial distance

This section details an analysis of attitudes held by residents living within the following interface communities:

- Ardoyne/Upper Ardoyne
- Whitewell/White City
- New Lodge/Tiger's Bay
- Lenadoon/Suffolk
- Manor Street/Oldpark
- Short Strand/Ballymacarrett

The information presented is based upon a survey (by Dr Peter Shirlow and colleagues) of 1600 adults (aged 16+) between 1998 and 2001. Respondents were asked a series of questions relating to life within an interface community, spatial interaction outside of their home community and the issue of violence both real and perceived.

Each of these geographical areas contains high levels of deprivation and many are characterised by relatively underdeveloped inter-community relations. As the evidence below indicates, it is clear that the majority of residents in each area rarely enter or use facilities which are located within the 'other' community. In determining these issues the researchers undertook a quantitative survey on issues concerning the integration and mobility of communities in relation to the production, consumption and observable social arenas. The pursuit of a quantitative survey was intentional in order to provide a more robust understanding of the mobility issues for both communities. The central aims of the survey work were to:

- facilitate a proper appreciation of the issues faced by interface communities

- understand how violence and fear impacts upon mobility and the use of facilities

- indicate to government and policymakers that the removal of fear requires an analysis of special needs and policy change

- understand the complex nature of avoidance strategies

- understand whether and how fear and violence dilutes the potential for economic development and normalised patterns of living. In particular to indicate that fear may reduce the mobility needed when searching for work

- provide data and information which sets out to the community the nature of the research undertaken

- fully comprehend what living in and at an interface actually means

- provide a policy initiative which provides the possibility of linking into all agencies, groups and individuals with a direct interest in addressing issues of concern to interface communities[9]

- provide data indicating the extent to which fear is experienced by different denominations, age groups and genders

- understand the link between fear/violence and the perpetuation of economic and social deprivation.

Table 1 indicates that the vast majority of respondents, in the interface areas studied, held no educational qualifications. In terms of those aged under 55, the number who did not hold any qualifications was twice the Northern Ireland average (28%). Among those who had qualifications, 5.2% held qualifications at 'A' level or above. This is significantly below the Northern Ireland average.

Table 1 - Qualifications held by survey respondents

Qualification	% share
None	73.7%
NVQs or equivalent	10.6%
GCSEs or Equivalent	8.5%
A levels or equivalent	3.2%
Degree or higher	2.0%

Table 2 shows that low levels of qualification held by respondents within interface areas was paralleled by high levels of unemployment. Unemployment at 24.1% was over twice the Belfast average of 9.8% (as measured in March 2002). Indeed only around one in five respondents were in paid work. High levels of inactivity and unemployment are a consequence of low levels of qualification, generational unemployment, chill factors, poor public transport infrastructures and poor employment histories. The lack of jobs in highly deprived areas is also of importance. There may also be a link between the impact of violence and trauma in relation to work.

Table 2 - Economic Status of survey respondents

Economic Status	% share
Employed	24.1%
Registered Unemployed	22.1%
Training	8.2%
Education	3.8%
Inactive	41.8%

Respondents were asked to determine whether economic and social conditions had changed since the paramilitary cease-fires of 1994. The following was observed:

• 52% of those living in predominantly Protestant/unionist areas and 47.9% in predominantly Catholic/nationalist areas concluded that these had worsened

• a mere 14.5% of those in Catholic/nationalist areas and 11.5% in Protestant/unionist areas indicated that social and economic conditions had improved

• just over a third indicated that conditions were similar or unchanged.

Employment

Within the Northern Irish context, fears and avoidance tactics are generally denoted by the official term 'chill factors'. 'Chill factors' refer to the refusal or reluctance of individuals to enter areas perceived as dominated by the 'other' community. It is accepted that violence and the threat of intimidation have created psychological burdens that are associated with restricted mobility between politically diverse communities. An extensive body of work undertaken by Borooah, Sheehan and Tomlinson, Shuttleworth et al. and McVeigh and Fisher has indicated that 'chill factors' are affiliated with experiences and perceptions of both fear and risk. In particular, this survey work that was conducted in highly segregated areas in Belfast showed that around a third of respondents stated that they have experienced physical violence at work because of their religion and/or political opinion. These surveys have also shown that at least 60% of respondents were not prepared to work in places that were perceived as dominated by the 'other' community.

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The issue of fear, avoidance and workplace choice is contingent upon the location of employment. Evidently, the crossing of inter-community interfaces is linked to distinct cultural interpretations. In this way, the accessibility of employment which is located in highly segregated communities is, currently, highly conditioned by perceptions of fear and risk.

Similarly, workplaces located in environments perceived as shared or neutral may create workplace structures that are more mixed.

Table 3 shows that just over 80% of all employment in Belfast in 1999 was located in places that were at least 70% Catholic/nationalist or Protestant/unionist. Over a third (37.2%) was located in places that were over 90% Catholic/nationalist or Protestant/unionist. This evidence indicates that a significant share of all employment within the Belfast District Council area (DCA) is based in highly segregated places.

Table 3 - Location of employment in Belfast by level of residential segregation

Population	% of all employment in Belfast DCA
Over 90% Catholic or Protestant	37.2%
Over 80% Catholic or Protestant	46.1%
Over 70% Catholic or Protestant	80.1%

Source: Census of Employment, 1999

The following was observed of respondents of working age:

• 63.2% stated that that their job seeking efforts had at some time been influenced by fear

• 68% of those from Catholic/nationalist areas, compared to 57.8% of respondents from Protestant/unionist areas, stated that fear had been a factor in job selection

• 43.7% of all respondents who were in work stated that they presently worked in a place perceived as dominated by members of the 'other' community.

The issue of choice of places within which to work is also prevalent in terms of traveling to work through areas perceived as dominated by the 'other' community. 46.8% of respondents would not take a job, even if it was a job in a 'same-identity' area, if they had to travel to that job via entering areas that are perceived as dominated by the 'other' community. It is perhaps not surprising, given this issue of safety with regard to workplaces and travel to work, that 73.1% of all respondents argued that their community is discriminated against when seeking work. The rate among those in predominantly Catholic/nationalist areas was 80.2% compared to 67.2% among Protestants/unionists.

Table 4 - Do you feel that your community is discriminated against when seeking work?

Do you feel that your community is discriminated against when seeking work	% Share
Yes	73.1%
No	26.9%

Violence and fear

Table 5 is based on Shirlow's calculations of deaths due to politically motivated violence in Belfast. The data is based upon newspaper articles and information that has been supplied by political groups and commemorative organisations. There is no definitive record of such deaths in Belfast. Moreover, there are disputes concerning locations, responsibility and what constitutes politically motivated violence. The information is based on those who died directly of an attack that can be attributed to some form of political motivation. In sum, the authors have identified 1612 such deaths within the Belfast Urban Area between 1966 and 2003.

Table 5 also provides evidence on the distance from an interface (measured as places that are at least 90% Catholic/nationalist or Protestant/unionist) and the location of all deaths. 84.25% of all deaths occurred within 1 km of an interface, while two thirds occurred within 500 metres. Evidently, the majority of deaths were closely linked to short distances from interface boundaries. Interface areas have been and remain the arenas within which deaths due to politically motivated violence are most likely to occur.

Table 5 - Relationship between deaths due to politically motivated violence and interfaces

Distance from Interface	% share of all deaths within BUA
Less than 100 metres	13.47%
Less than 200 metres	28.89%
Less than 300 metres	44.25%
Less than 400 metres	57.28%
Less than 500 metres	66.53%
Less than 600 metres	71.88%
Less than 700 metres	75.91%
Less than 800 metres	79.39%
Less than 900 metres	81.53%
Less than 1000 metres	84.25%
Over 1000 metres	15.74%

Source: Author's calculation from newspapers and information supplied by commemorative organisations and community groups.

The impact of such high levels of violence has had an enduring impact upon the mobility of people within interface areas. As shown in Table 6 the vast majority of people (84.3%) feel safe when moving within their own area during the day. As expected, the share that feels safe drops in relation to night-time (84.3% to 52.0%). This fall is largely associated with more women than men stating that they would feel scared or wouldn't go out at night within their own community. However, when asked if they would feel safe walking through an area perceived as dominated by the 'other' community during the day, 18.8% of respondents reported that they would feel safe or quite safe doing so. This share again falls (18.8% to 6%) when respondents were questioned on walking through such places at night-time. In this last case, however, unlike the anxieties concerning movement within their own community, the share of men and women who would feel unsafe, scared or wouldn't go into areas perceived as dominated by the 'other' community was almost equal.

Table 6 - Perceptions of safety within local areas and areas perceived as dominated by the other community

	Local areas during day	Local area at night	Other area during day	Other area at night
Safe	84.3%	52.0%	9.8%	2.1%
Quite Safe	11.8%	9.1%	9.0%	3.9%
Unsafe	3.9%	18.0%	26.1%	5.9%
Scared	0.0%	10.9%	20.1%	10.1%
Wouldn't go	0.0%	10.0%	44.0%	78.0%

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Respondents were asked whether they felt that violence and anti-social activity had decreased, increased or remained the same. Around 3 in 10 felt that crime and drug use had increased. This low level seems peculiar in that recorded information for the RUC/PSNI over this period has concluded that both have increased.

Respondents were unlikely to state that crime within their own community had increased at the hands of people who live within their own community. A mere one in five compared to 53.6% stated that violence within their own area that had been conducted by residents of that area had increased, compared to violence that had been perpetrated by people outside of the area. Similarly, only 18.1% stated that violence within their own community, perpetrated by youth from that community, had increased. Yet 58.6% believed that violence within the area, perpetrated by youth from the 'other' community, had increased since 1994.

In sum, 63.6% perceived that violence against their area by the 'other' community had increased since the first paramilitary cease-fires. Just over half, 52%, reported that violent acts conducted by the police and /or army had also increased.

Table 7 - Perceptions of changes in volume of violence and anti-social behaviour since 1994

Type of violence/anti-social activity	Increased	Decreased	Same
Crime	30.8%	29.0%	40.2%
Drug use	30.0%	31.6%	38.4%
Violence within area by own community	20.1%	48.1%	31.1%
Violence within area by other community	53.6%	32.7%	13.7%
Violence within area by youth from own community	18.1%	44.1%	37.8%
Violence within area by youth from other community	58.6%	27.9%	13.5%
Violence against area by other community	63.6%	13.1%	23.9%
Police/Army	52.5%	13.0%	34.5%

Consumption patterns

Respondents were asked to identify the places in which they undertook shopping, leisure and access to public facilities. This was measured in two ways. Firstly, the location of chosen facilities in terms of community background (religious/political identity) and, secondly, in relation to distance. In overall terms, 78.9% of respondents undertook their main consumption activities in places perceived as dominated by people from the same community background. Given this high level of segregation, the measuring of distance was important in that it permits an analysis of the journeys that are undertaken in order to locate safe places.

In relation to access to health facilities in the Oldpark (predominantly Protestant/unionist) and Manor Street (predominantly Catholic/nationalist) areas, it is evident that there was virtually no mixing between the communities. Manor Street residents tended to use health centres/GPs located in the Ardoyne/Bone/Cliftonville Road area. The average distance travelled by Manor Street residents in order to locate health centres is 0.64 km. This compares to 1.35km for residents of Oldpark. Virtually all Oldpark residents used facilities in the Shankill Road/Woodvale area. In sum, Oldpark residents travelled twice as far as their respective neighbours in order to access healthcare. Given that most nearby facilities are located in nationalist/republican areas, it is evident that Oldpark residents use the Shankill and Woodvale areas as the arenas in which to shop and use public facilities. Within this sample no members of the Manor Street group used health facilities that are located in what could be identified as unionist/loyalist places. A small group, around 8%, from Oldpark used facilities located in republican/nationalist areas. All members of this sub-group are pensioners.

Given that there are few facilities in Oldpark and that most respondents travel to areas that are predominantly Protestant/unionist, it is not surprising that most people in that area travel much further to access most facilities. They tend to travel nearly twice as far for daily shopping and social security services.

Table 8 - Spatial interaction between Oldpark and Manor Street

|	Total Distance (km) Oldpark	Total Distance (km) Manor St.	Mean trip (km) Oldpark	Mean trip (km) Manor St.
Daily Shopping	253.72	129.94	2.54	1.30
Leisure Centres	145.41	76.57	1.45	0.77
Health Centres	75.42	35.20	1.35	0.64
Pubs	50.31	80.60	1.50	0.81
Post Offices	98.66	58.32	0.99	1.58
Library	149.94	58.57	0.59	1.50
Social Security	120.12	70.79	1.20	0.71

Table 9 details mobility and interaction between Short Strand and Ballymacarrett. In this instance most facilities are located within predominantly Protestant/unionist places. In terms of daily shopping, the respondents tended to stay within their own areas. Short Strand respondents tended not to use the facilities at places such as Connswater and the Newtownards Road in great numbers. There was a general tendency for individuals from Short Strand to choose facilities within the city centre or the outer rim of west Belfast.

Table 9 - Spatial interaction between Short Strand and Ballymacarrett

	Total Distance (km) Short Strand	Total Distance (km) Ballymacarett	Mean trip (km) Short Strand	Mean trip (km) Ballymacarrett
Daily Shopping	1344.7	1111.69	1.51	1.25
Shopping Centres	253.72	129.94	2.54	1.30
Leisure Centres	145.51	76.57	2.79	1.22
Health Centres	35.42	57.20	0.43	0.71
Pubs	50.31	80.60	0.65	1.26
Post Offices	98.66	98.66	1.10	0.75
Library	149.94	149.94	3.37	1.27
Job Centres	120.12	120.12	3.12	1.77
Social Security	121.08	118.96	2.98	1.76

The extent of segregation between these communities is represented in figures 1 and 2 below. Here, mobility flows are represented by arrows, which highlight how many respondents go to which places. As can be seen, the arrows for Short Strand go westward while the arrows for Ballymacarrett go eastward.

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Figure 4 - Map identifying the location of services used by Ballymacarrett respondents
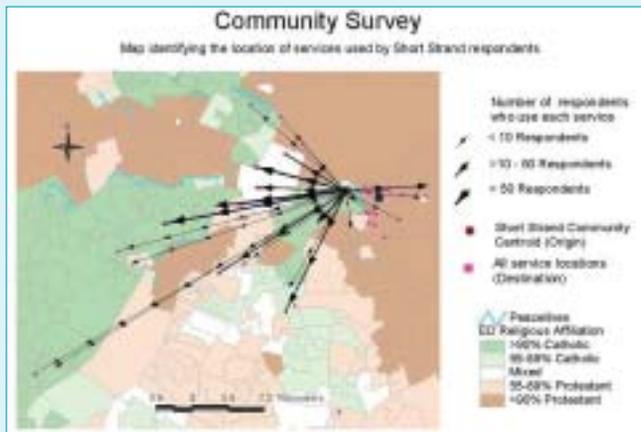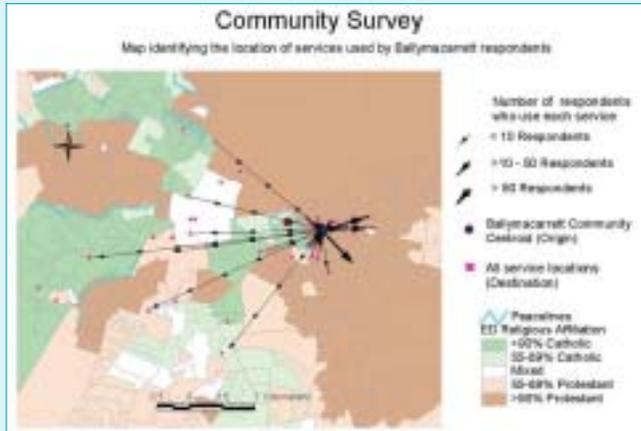
Figure 5 - Map identifying the location of services used by Short Strand respondents

To summarise

This section has attempted to describe some of the kinds of multiple disadvantage for interface communities, which help to explain why they are a relevant policy issue. What is clearly evident from the analysis is that interface areas experience a cycle of decline in which the connections between segregation, violence and fear have a range of effects on people, community stability and investment. It is significant that nearly all the interface areas studied suffer from economic decline and high rates of social deprivation. This affects the number, range and quality of local services such as shops and creates instability in the demographic base of the area. *Churning* of the local population is created when people want to move away and even fewer want to move in. Sometimes, only those with least choice in the housing allocation system find interface areas a realistic housing option, creating a feeling of transition in the residential population. Not surprisingly, investment is limited and jobs are hard to come by. Education and health suffer and child poverty is often highest in interface areas. Suspicion, fear and division are, in turn, reproduced feeding back into the cycle of decline. This cycle will require coordinated, long term and comprehensive planning to break.

Figure 6 - The cycle of decline in interface areas

The diagram below attempts to summarise some of the main issues arising from this section. It should be noted that this is a generalised depiction and that the experiences of interface communities will differ as each is unique. Generally, also, it is true that housing density and need are higher in Catholic/nationalist areas than in Protestant/unionist areas, so that levels of housing dereliction will vary also.
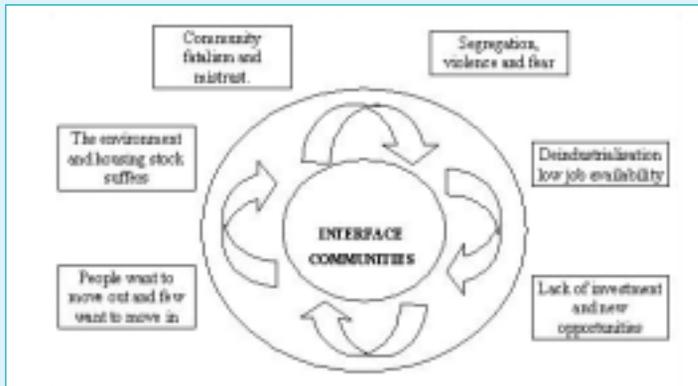
This section acknowledges that policy makers and planners have made important steps to address the problems of interface areas. But we argue here that these need to better connected, resourced and take a long term strategic view of the development agenda.

What are we trying to influence?

It is important to recognise that Government has responded to the problems of interface areas but often in negative and reactive ways, sometimes brought about by local crises. The timeline below demonstrates some of the initiatives attempted in interface areas across the city. It shows that the interface has generally been conceived as a security problem in which physical and environmental solutions have been the primary programme response. The logic of this document is that we need to broaden both our understanding of the issues and the range of policy instruments required in order to effectively address the needs of interface communities.

Figure 7 - Timeline of policy responses in interface areas

1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Key policy responses
Barbed wire fences of a temporary appearance	Palisade fences and buffer zones Housing Redevelopment and Action Areas	Environmental walls Comprehensive Development Schemes	CCTV Cameras	**Security responses Physical solutions**
Play schemes	Action Teams	Making Belfast Work	Initiatives of the Centre (OFMDFM)	**Targeted additional resources**

Three levels of policy intervention might be considered. Although this clearly simplifies the approach, it might be helpful in differentiating the roles and responsibilities of the key agencies involved:

- **Primary policies** are concerned with territorial development and include planning, urban regeneration, housing management and transportation
- **Secondary policies** are those that have a material effect on interface areas but are not concerned primarily with 'land' and its development. This would include for example, economic development, culture, arts and leisure services, and health and social services planning and provision
- **Community centred policies** are those directed at spatially defined communities and include the work of agencies such as the DSD Voluntary and Community Unit, the Local Strategy Partnership and Belfast City Council.

Primary policies

Primary policies should offer the strategic leadership and coordinating capacity to ensure that we have a comprehensive approach to interface area planning and there is evidence of considerable progress in this area across Northern Ireland and in Belfast specifically.

- Land use planning: The table below is taken from the Regional Development strategy, which is the main physical planning framework for Northern Ireland. It demonstrates a commitment to understanding the spatial effects of segregation and the need to address interface issues specifically. It also relies on a *dual approach*, which was suggested above, in that it at one and the same time respects segregation whilst promoting integration where possible. The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan is being prepared within this context and has raised issues relating to territoriality in its *Issues Paper*, which was published for consultation last year.

Table 10 - Regional Development Strategy and segregation

Strategic Planning Guidance (SPG SRC 3) objective

- To foster development which contributes to community relations, recognises cultural diversity and reduces socio economic differentials within Northern Ireland

SRC 3.1 Foster Patterns of development supporting to community cohesion

- facilitate the development of integrated communities where people wish to live together and to promote respect, encouragement and celebration of different traditions; and

- promote respect, encouragement and celebration of different traditions, and encourage communication and social intercourse in areas where communities are living apart.

SRC 3.2 Underpin the dual approach by fostering community interaction which could also contribute, over time and on the basis of choice, to greater community integration

- Develop partnerships between public, private, voluntary and community sectors to facilitate community co-operation and involvement in securing social, economic and environmental objectives

- Facilitate the removal of existing physical barriers between communities, subject to local community agreement

- Support the development of 'shared places' accessible to all members of the community

- Revitalise the role of town centres and other common locations well served by public transport as focal points for shopping, services, employment, cultural and leisure activities for the whole community

- Promote the development of major employment/enterprise areas in locations which are accessible to all sections of the community

- Improve and develop public transport to assist in providing safe and equitable access to services, facilities and employment opportunities essential to the vitality of local communities

- Strengthen the network of local museums and heritage centres and arts centres with a special focus on understanding cultural diversity; and

- Promote cultural diversity through the creation of opportunities in the creative industries associated with the arts.

- Urban policy: Urban policy has also made significant attempts to address issues relating to segregated space in local regeneration programmes. DSD has closely aligned its policies to the New Targeting Social Need (NTSN) and in its *Consultation Paper on Neighbourhood Renewal* it has highlighted the connection between NTSN and equality in tackling the most disadvantaged areas. The Department's new policy will be published later this year and, according to the Consultation Paper is likely to target the bulk of Departmental resources on the areas prioritised

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by the Noble Index and those most in need in Northern Ireland. In Belfast, these correlate strongly with the interface areas in the city. The URBAN II Community Initiative Programme 2000-2006 is targeting the structural funds on inner North Belfast and highlights the need to address the physical, economic and community effects of the interfaces within a single integrated development programme. The Department for Social Development is also targeting its PEACE II (Measure 2.11) resources on interface areas and plans to work through local partnership structures to address the multiple needs of communities living on either side of interfaces in the Short Strand, Lower Springfield, Donegall Road and the Markets.

- Housing: The Housing Executive had launched a consultation document *Towards a Community Relations Policy* that presented an effective analysis about the relationship between housing management and segregation, chill factors such as flags and sectarian graffiti and the need to nurture existing mixed housing estates. The final policy document tended to concentrate more on community safety than explicit community relations issues but the Executive has addressed issues of territoriality in some of its operational programming. For example, the *North Belfast Housing Strategy* recognised differential housing needs between Protestants/unionists and Catholics/nationalists and the sensitivity required when dealing with housing and land issues in the area.

- Transportation: The Regional Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland failed to make the same strategic commitment to issues of segregation and interface areas that the Regional Development Strategy did. It was noted that accessibility is one of the crucial variables in linking interface communities elsewhere in the urban area and that the public transport system needed to be sensitised to the ethnic geography of the city. There is little evidence, as yet, that these factors seem to be built into transport planning decisions in Northern Ireland, although a new Transport Plan for Belfast offers another opportunity to shape policy locally.

Secondary policies

Policies that impact on interface communities in a secondary way include, for example, local economic development, health and social services planning and culture, arts and leisure. The recent debate about the relocation of Maysfield Leisure Centre in East Belfast highlights the sensitivity around key aspects of service provision. We have also witnessed the dual provision of some facilities in order to facilitate both communities within the same broad catchment of health and social services facilities. The issue of culture and identity is also one that is highly sensitive in interface communities with exclusive and externally aggressive identities being given more prominence and media air play than many of the cooperative ventures on culture and heritage between segregated communities. Clearly, these are issues that matter to people and the previous has demonstrated the ways in which they make a material difference to people's lives. Any comprehensive response to the needs of interface areas needs to tie together the range of activities that help make communities function in safe and sustainable ways.

Community centred policy

The turn to community within a range of policy areas has seen local people, community groups and the voluntary sector brought into a range of programmes and decision-making bodies in new and innovative ways. Local Strategy Partnerships, the Belfast Area Partnerships and the structures emerging from the review of public administration in Northern Ireland have all been important arenas for consideration of the regeneration of interface communities. They have in the past been the policy areas where the interface has perhaps been given more positive and inclusive treatment in ways that have produced more locally relevant progress and agreements. It is important that the skills and practices developed at local level, especially within interface areas, are built upon not as separate spheres of activity but linked to the policy debate about segregated communities in Belfast.

This brief policy-analysis suggests a mixed approach to the management and regeneration of interface areas although it represents considerable progress in the last 5 years when there was little or no mention of issues relating to segregated and contested space in major policy statements. It is something to build upon and suggests that in some sectors and at 'high' levels of policy making

there is a commitment to tackling the spatial legacy of the conflict in the city. The equality agenda has undoubtedly had an effect in this area although its provisions have not been fully exploited in key areas of programme delivery and that is an area that BIP can clearly work on. The key point here is that the development of a proactive approach to the regeneration of interface areas requires a partnership of interests and that the best way forward is to work collaboratively with decision makers rather than through an adversarial style that is less appropriate to current conditions.

To summarise

We know that Government Departments and key agencies have attempted to address the problems of interface areas across Belfast and we acknowledge the commitments that they have made to tackle deprivation and sectarianism in the most marginal areas. However, we feel that there needs to be a broadly based strategy which:

- Makes explicit connections between policies at a high level in Government and prioritises the issue within Government thinking and planning
- Identifies a champion for the regeneration of interface areas at the heart of Government
- Develops a shared understanding of the needs of interface communities among Departments and agencies with very different remits
- Integrates programmes on the ground in a way that is mutually reinforcing
- Embraces communities in the decision making process
- Supports initiatives, groups and projects that have a track record of success in addressing the needs of interface communities and development opportunities
- Brings conflict management and conflict transformation work into the centre of strategy development in interface areas
- Takes a long term view and goes beyond the crisis management that sometimes characterises Government response to violence at the interface
- Resources development at an appropriate level and in a way that recognises the slow and patient process of change in interface renewal and regeneration.

This is a formidable list and not all of the tasks will fall exclusively on Government. Partnership is a much used word in local development but sometimes effective responses will only be successful if they achieve the necessary integration between the actors in Government, the community, the voluntary sector and indeed the private sector in making change happen.

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We set out below what we feel might be the key aspects of a programme for change. It represents what we think is important to the regeneration and long-term development of interface areas. Earlier, we described the multiple disadvantage experienced by interface communities as cyclical and self-reinforcing in nature. In the section below, we outline what we feel are the conditions necessary for the social and economic regeneration and reconciliation of interface communities, in order to reverse the spiral that some interface communities have experienced for a long time.

Absence of violence

The absence of violence at interfaces is an obvious pre-condition for the growth of more stable communities. Communities in the midst of ongoing inter-communal disturbances often react to crisis with a view to immediate cessation and containment and can be exhausted by this process. The presence of constant violence is counter-productive to the pro-active development of long-term strategies which focus on identifying and addressing the causes of conflict. A period of relative calm is necessary for local communities to focus away from the immediacy of the effects of violence and responses to violent incidents and begin to focus on how communities might create a permanent stability.

a) Manifestations of interface violence

Interface violence, typically, can manifest through a number of forms:

- 'Recreational' or youth-led violence. This is an ingrained feature of life in many interface areas. In many parts of the city, children and young people are attracted to the interface, often from further afield, as an area with commonly fewer adult checks and balances upon their behaviour. Whilst at the interface, children and young people often become involved in intercommunity violence which then rebounds' on interface communities and feeds the process further. It is important to acknowledge that young people are the product of the society in which they have grown up. In this sense we have socialised our young people into interface violence and should not scapegoat them for their behaviour in this respect. Nevertheless it is important also to be clear that interface community groups commonly report that the behaviour of young people at the interface is a key element in the cycle of intercommunity violence

- Event-linked violence. The summer period here, especially, has become known as the 'mad season' – a time when unresolved conflicts, particularly over the parade/protest issue, political identity and the ownership of territory, are ritually re-affirmed. Demographic change across the city has contributed towards the development of parade and protest-related conflict and, sometimes, large-scale civil disorder between rival groups of supporters and with PSNI, RIR and other security forces. The same demographic changes in Belfast have also caused an increase in tension between Protestant/unionist communities' need for security and survival and Catholic/nationalist communities' need for housing. Such tensions can be ignited by political, sporting and cultural events

- Casual proximity-related violence. Even where interface community groups and activists have worked effectively to reduce interface violence, there is often an ongoing theme of casual interface violence perpetrated by those who are outside of the ambit of their work. This is typically perpetrated by people passing the interface on their way home after a night out, or after an 'old firm' match or similar

- Orchestrated and premeditated interface violence. This is most often associated with armed paramilitary groupings and is, patently, amongst the most dangerous and life-threatening forms of interface violence. Further, given that this is the type of violence most feared within interface communities, it should not be surprising that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, other forms of interface violence may often be assumed (wrongly) to be linked to this. In this way, for example, incidents of youth-led, event-linked or casual proximity-related violence may be perceived as evidence of orchestration by the 'other' community and, unchecked, can lead to a worsening spiral of violence at the interface.

b) Approaches to interface conflict management

Against this backdrop, a variety of models and approaches have emerged in the field of conflict management and conflict resolution in interface areas. Some examples, very briefly, include:

- Mobile phone networks. These currently operate between community groups and activists in a number of interface areas of Belfast and provide a means for rumour control and co-operative conflict prevention and intervention in order to minimise interface violence

- Independent monitoring. With the support of community groups on each side of the interface, independent monitors can support an ongoing peace-building process by assisting in identifying and addressing sources of conflict and violence particularly at times of tension, and by bearing witness to each community's work

- Relationship-building work between interface community groups, activists and young people. This field of work aims to identify and address the underlying causes of intercommunity conflict through assisting those concerned to understand the views of the 'other' in promoting effective dialogue with a view to problem-solving those issues and events which give rise to conflict locally.

One key theme running through these examples is that those who have been party to the conflict in the past need to be party to its resolution in the future, as otherwise any reconciliation work is built upon sand.

There is a need to document, disseminate and educate with regard to these and other models and approaches in relation to conflict management and conflict resolution work in interface areas.

Strong Community Infrastructure

The presence of a vibrant community infrastructure is essential for the regeneration of interface communities as it is through this infrastructure that the community can identify and articulate its needs and frustrations as well as create change. Community based organisations and/or groups might include for example residents associations, tenants associations, community centres, youth clubs, etc. It may be useful to make a distinction also between community-based fixed service delivery such as I.T training and creche-provision and other community activities which are geared more to be responsive and dynamic in their ability to adapt to changing circumstances and needs within the community.

Collective Activity

A history of collective activity where the whole community has been engaged on particular issues through public meetings, attendance at annual general meetings, and consultation exercises is desirable for a number of reasons. It allows the community in a holistic sense to be engaged around the development of future strategies; it provides a vehicle for ownership; it can test community temperature and ultimately provide approval and support for the development of regenerative strategies.

Community Leadership

Committed and articulate community activists who can express the experiences of their community - their fears and frustrations as well as their hopes and aspirations - are necessary actors in the developmental process of regeneration. This leadership needs to have integrity, community credentials and credibility through leaders who live or work in the interface community and very often have had a key role in the reduction of tension and violence. As interface community groups move towards effective peace-building strategies, community leaders often report that their workload increases dramatically in comparison with their traditional community development roles. One recurring theme in many interface areas is a reported lack of new younger community leaders coming forward to support those who have had this role for some years, with the result that many

community leaders are over-burdened and the work that can be done is restricted in scope. Similarly, another concern is in terms of the restricted and confused provision of learning and support structures in place in order to assist community leaders in making the transition from 'traditional' community development work towards the development and implementation of more inclusive regeneration strategies in interface areas.

An integrated vision

A community with low esteem and morale, with no future vision of an improvement in the quality of life in which they have to play a major role may not have the capacity to allow or contribute towards a regenerative process. There needs to have been some reflective experience which allows for the examination of positive change. This type of vision should set out the connections between economic, social and environmental regeneration and should set out how it will be embedded in community structures and priorities. Addressing the explicit effects of segregation, fear and mistrust will be important and mainstream regeneration projects need to be clearly connected to these objectives. The contribution of this vision to the improvement of services and facilities for, say, young people and children could open up the possibilities to address common problems with common language and cross-community support. Again, it is important to remember that there is a base of practice and expertise upon which to develop this type of intervention in interface areas. This stock of experience and people should be used and supported as fully as possible.

Political Support

Interface communities live with the social, economic and environmental out-workings of residential segregation caused by violent political conflict. In the same way, our politicians live largely within a world characterised by political segregation where political opinions, especially on contentious issues, may be formed with reference to 'our own' community much more than with reference to the 'other' community. In this sense, it is not surprising that interface conflict has the power to draw in political representatives who may then, in defending what is perceived as 'their' community's position, inadvertently contribute towards a spiralling of the conflict both within the media and on the streets. Constructive dialogue and engagement with and between local political representatives are essential ingredients for any community-led initiative in regeneration and reconciliation. It is desirable, therefore, that political representatives have access to learning, support and dialogue opportunities which can assist them in the design, implementation and support of such initiatives.

Paramilitary Engagement and Support

In many areas, local people have mixed feelings about local paramilitary representatives and organisations. On the one hand, paramilitary organisations may be locally supported particularly at times of perceived threat from within the 'other' community or paramilitary organisation. On the other hand, particularly in the absence or decline of such threat, feelings towards paramilitary organisations may be more negative especially if they are viewed as exerting non-democratic, illegal, and unaccountable forms of control within the community. With this in mind, there is a need for paramilitary organisations to play their part in reducing that feeling of threat stemming from within the other community, so that defence is no longer required over time. Similarly, there is a need for paramilitary organisations to redefine their role and function in order to better support and engage with locally democratic and accountable regenerative and peace-building activities. There is evidence that this process of positive change is already underway in a number of areas.

Supportive Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's)

Voluntary organisations, using genuine capacity-building methodologies, have a crucial role to play in supporting steps towards conflict transformation and social and economic regeneration in interface areas. The role of these NGO's is four-fold:

- to provide the arguments and advocacy skills for community leaders and community based organisations to articulate the reasons why it is necessary and beneficial that an approach towards local area regeneration should include a strategy of conflict transformation and long-term reconciliation

- to act as technicians, supporting the acquisition of key skills, knowledge and experiential learning required to design and implement a community-led process

- to act as ongoing mentors and support structures in ensuring the implementation of the devised strategies, as well as supporting community leaders in adapting to changes in local context

- to act as agents of change across the broader NGO and statutory sectors.

Statutory Support

Local interface community regeneration initiatives will not bear fruit unless the relevant statutory agencies with responsibility for service delivery in interface communities are fully committed to supporting this work through financial as well as other means, as key stakeholders in its success.

This requires statutory agencies to commit to being partners and catalysts in the process of interface area regeneration rather than, as too often, bystanders in this process.

Statutory agencies need also to be aware of the complexities and sensitivities of undertaking work of this nature, rather than simply how the work impacts upon their agency. It is important to note that statutory agencies need to operate in a coordinated manner to the full range of responses and requirements necessary for the implementation of a successful local project.

Finally, and certainly within a Belfast context, the huge reliance within the interface community sector upon statutory funding agencies such as Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO) is worth noting. It will be important that the DSD's finalised Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy Implementation Plan reflects the needs of interface communities.

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In this section we try to draw the main components of the approach together and it is vital that it addresses policy development in a corporate way. This means looking at where, how and who makes policy in Northern Ireland and deciding the appropriate points and mechanisms to influence Government decision taking.

How do we want to see change achieved?

1. We need a commitment at the heart of Government to address the regeneration of interface communities both strategically and comprehensively. This means placing interfaces in the Programme for Government as this connects so many themes of Government planning including tackling disadvantage, making people healthier and promoting community safety, education, skills-development and employment.

   We would like to see interfaces identified as a priority in the Programme for Government in Northern Ireland with specific links to the main programme priorities set out in successive plans. A champion for interface issues would help to embed it within high-level administrative and political structures in Government.

2. We also need to see this commitment articulated by key Departments concerned with what we have termed primary areas and feel that the efforts made in the Regional Development Strategy could be built upon especially in the implementation of local policies and programmes.

   Public Service Agreements and Service Delivery Agreements of the main *Primary* Government Departments could articulate a commitment to tackling interface issues in their areas of influence.

3. Where relevant these Departmental commitments could be closely linked with New Targeting Social Need and Section 75 Equality Action Plans. This would help to reinforce a commitment to addressing interfaces in a linked way that sees social need and segregation as related and in need of being addressed within integrated planning frameworks.

   The needs of interface areas should be addressed specifically as New Targeting Social Need and Equality Action Plans in the relevant Departments.

4. But we also want to see some policy ownership of the interface issue at the point of implementation. All Government strategies concerned with the use and development of land should identify the connection between their policies and interfaces. The Regional Development Strategy points in the way in this normative task. Specific programmes should tie these programmes together in specific interface areas. Neighbourhood Plans suggested by the Department for Social Development as part of their new Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, *People and Place*, might be the way in which this is carried forward. In particular, we would like to see the issues that we have identified above embraced within local plans and strategies. This would require, for example, that the agencies responsible for economic investment and regeneration (the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and INVEST NI, as well as the Departments of Education and Employment and Learning) should target interface areas for concerted attention.

   Strategic plans of the main *primary* Departments should prioritise the issue of the social and economic regeneration of interface areas and local plans should bring these together with other relevant development interests in each particular case.

Governance and structures

5. Recent years have seen the development of new governance arrangements, which have allowed partners in the voluntary, statutory and private sectors to work together to achieve change. This practice needs to be built upon inside and crucially outside Government. Inside Government we feelthat the Ministerial *Community Action Group* could help to ensure that the strategic commitments highlighted above are to be turned into actions on the ground.

    We would like to see the Ministerial Community Action Group develop as a high level cross Department structure to deal with interfaces.

6. Choice and participation are, as we noted before, essential to the long-term development of interfaces. It is important that participatory process and structures underpin the development of the interfaces and that the pace of development matches the priorities of local people.

    Participatory processes need to underpin local strategy development and proposals for interface areas need to be implemented in a way and at a pace that local people are comfortable with.

7. The Belfast Area Partnerships (BAPs) all address interface issues and it is important that they prioritise this issue in their statements of needs and local strategy planning. Again, our emphasis here is to develop reinforcing actions that work together to promote the regeneration of interface communities and tackle this on a number of levels and through a number of organisational forums.

    The Belfast Area Partnerships should prioritise interface issues in the local planning and programme development.

8. It is also important that Belfast City Council is fully involved in decisions about the interface. The Council has launched their own anti-sectarianism initiative and their *Master Plan* for the city, which fits well with the need to tackle the impact of interfaces on the city more broadly. The reform of public administration in Northern Ireland is likely to reposition the Council as a key policy development and implementation body and so we need to ensure that they continue to prioritise and tackle the interface issue.

    Belfast City Council should prioritise interface issues in their local planning and policy making.

9. Belfast City Council should also explore how it might take the lead in bringing together political representatives, statutory organisations and community based groups to develop an overarching city-wide strategy for addressing interface problems and the regeneration of interface areas.

    Belfast City Council should convene a broadly based working group to develop a strategic plan to address the specific issues and needs associated with living in interface areas.

10. The Belfast Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is a body which could play a greater role in addressing issues relating to safety for interface communities. The CSP should ensure that the specific issues and needs of interface communities are addressed in its community safety audit of the city and the partnership should proactively support and develop community based safety initiatives in interface areas.

    Belfast Community Safety Partnership, as it evolves, should ensure that issues pertinent to interface communities are clearly addressed in any community safety audit and that their distinctive needs are recognised when supporting new projects.

Skills and measurement

11. It is important that we develop and share the skills needed to deliver change in interface areas. Here, there is a responsibility on the community relations sector to test and apply best practice on human rights, conflict resolution, dispute settlement and mediation in interface communities. It is also important that these competencies are acquired across communities, voluntary sector groups and the statutory sector. The efforts by planners and urban managers to engage with the problems of segregation need to be supported by people in the community sector with a track

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record of work in Belfast and who have drawn from conflicts across the world. This will be especially important in helping to implement the equality agenda effectively in interface communities.

> We need to develop skills in conflict management and dispute resolution within and between the sectors concerned with interface development. There is a role for agencies like the Community Relations Council and the Human Rights Commission to work with community based groups to develop appropriate training programmes and activities to develop community capacity to respond more effectively to conflict and disputes.

12. We also need to develop more effective ways of measuring and monitoring the effects of interfaces on local people as well as on the environment and economy. It is important that we can assess the effects of interfaces on behaviour as well as on attitudes and that we can record changes in these areas over time so that it may also assist with policy implementation.

> We need to develop effective methods of monitoring and evaluating life in the interfaces over time, especially to assess the impact of policy and local practice. This might involve community based organisations working in partnership with academics and the government sector to determine appropriate indicators and means of measurement.

13. There is also a need to identify the relevant impact of the current diverse range of measures and policies that have been initiated in response to recent interface violence, initiatives in North Belfast for example include the Community Action Unit, Urban II, CCTV cameras as well as numerous community based projects. However, there is no clear indication of what initiatives are having most or any impact.

> OFMDFM should commission an independent analysis of the relative impact of all recent policy initiatives that have been implemented in response to interface disorder and disadvantage.

Resources

14. There is a need to acknowledge that the problems associated with living in interface areas will take considerable time and resources to address. However, too much activity, even necessary 'fire fighting' work, has been funded on a short term basis. The Community Action Unit has begun to address such problems in North Belfast, but there is a need to recognise that interfaces are a factor of life across the city, and appropriate levels of funding need to be made available in order to increase and support empowered communities.

> Funding bodies should be encouraged to support longer term programmes of work both through statutory bodies and community based organisations.

Systems

15. Section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides an important framework to address the potential of the good community relations duty in interface areas.

> Relevant Government Departments should attempt to work a positive approach to interface management into their Equality Plans in pursuit of their Section 72(2) commitments.

16. Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) should be used as fully as possible to ensure that Government Departments meet their commitments in interface areas. Policies, programmes and decisions need to be routinely proofed to ensure that they do not adversely affect conditions in the interface and that where possible, they can add positively to local development in each case.

> EQIAs should be used as fully as possible to ensure that policies contribute effectively to the development of interface areas.

End note

The danger with all of the initiatives and approaches suggested above is that the institutions concerned will address these in minor ways, for example by 'parking' new responsibilities within already under-resourced departments and agencies, so that the gap between formulation and implementation of policy remains essentially unchanged.

The agenda for the development of the interfaces will need to be long term and well resourced. It needs to build on the experiences and practices of groups on the ground and address, head-on, the conflict which is at the root of many problems across the city. Government needs to value and support this work and place the regeneration of interface communities at the heart of decision-making and resource planning. We have suggested how that might be embedded within Government in an integrated way and have mapped out some of the key features of the task in front of us all.

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Abbreviations

DSD	The Department for Social Development has policy responsibility for urban regeneration and the community and voluntary sector. The Department published a strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, *People and Place*, in 2003.
NIHE	The Housing Executive responsible for the management of public sector housing in the region.
PfG	The Programme for Government describes the main policies and programme of action for the Northern Ireland administration.
PSAs	Public Service Agreements covers a Government Department's main programmes and sets out how the Department will carry out its responsibilities to deliver public services within the resources allocated in the Budget.
SDAs	Service Delivery Agreements set out in grater detail the actions that Departments will take to ensure delivery of their PSA targets and provide associated performance targets for this work.
RDS	The Regional Development Strategy is the main physical development plan for Northern Ireland up to the year 2025.
RTS	The Regional Transport Strategy is the transport equivalent of the RDS and sets the context for transport planning in Northern Ireland.
BMAP	The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan is the main physical development plan for greater Belfast and will be produced in draft in 2004.
EQIAs	Equality Impact Assessments are carried out on Government policies, programmes and projects to ensure that they do not discriminate against the nine equality groups as defined in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
OFMDFM	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

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