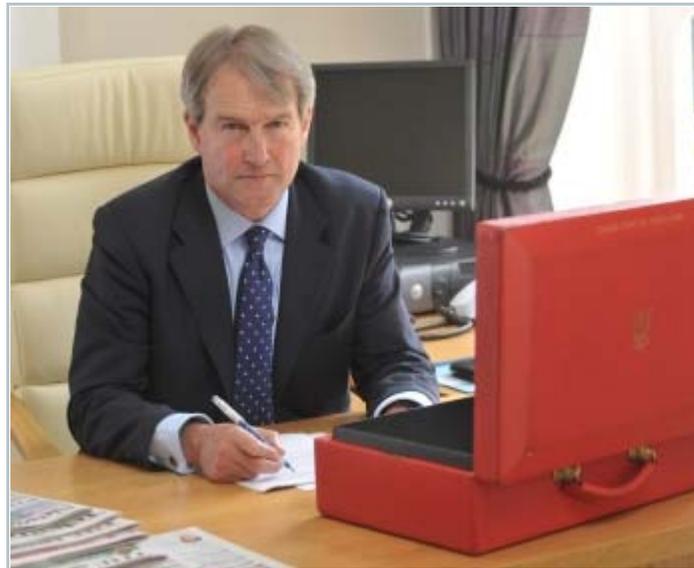


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Secretary of State to end the use of the Temporary 50:50 Recruitment Provisions

TUESDAY 22 MARCH 2011

Secretary of State to end the use of the Temporary 50:50 Recruitment Provisions



The Secretary of State has today published the Government's response to the public consultation on the temporary 50:50 recruitment provisions of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. The consultation closed on 4 February and a total of 162 responses were received. After careful consideration of the responses and having had regard to the considerable progress made towards securing a police service that is more fully reflective of the community in Northern Ireland, the Secretary of State has concluded that the provisions should be allowed to lapse on 28 March 2011. A Written Ministerial statement has been placed in the House.

Owen Paterson said: **“Some ten years after the introduction of the provisions, a significant proportion of serving officers – currently 29.76% - are now from a Catholic community background. This is at the top end of the critical mass identified by Patten. It represents a tremendous change since the time of the Patten report when only 8.3% of Royal Ulster Constabulary officers were from a Catholic community background. Last year also saw the completion of devolution, with policing and justice powers transferred from Westminster to the Northern Ireland Executive. With this transformation in the composition of the PSNI and Northern Ireland 's continued political progress, the use of these special measures can no longer be justified.**

The Government, the Department of Justice and the PSNI remain fully committed to the principle of the PSNI being reflective of the society it polices. The provisions have clearly been instrumental in getting us to this point but they were always intended to be temporary and now that the principle has become fully embedded it is right that they come to an end allowing PSNI composition to develop naturally.

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MONDAY 4 APRIL 2011

We want to see this progress continue and for Catholic representation in the PSNI to grow further over time. We must all play a part. Patten recommended that the key to making the PSNI representative of the communities it serves was for community leaders to actively encourage their young people to join the service and to remove all discouragements from joining. Patten's vision of a fair, impartial and effective Police Service does not end with the provisions.

Policing is, rightly, now a devolved matter so this issue must be locally owned and taken forward by everyone in Northern Ireland. The Chief Constable will continue to report and be accountable to the Policing Board. The PSNI Shared Future Strategy agreed by the Policing Board demonstrates PSNI's continuing commitment to promoting equality and diversity, achieving good relations and building trust with the community.

The issue of a PSNI which is reflective of the community it polices is now one which must be owned and taken forward by local politicians, local community leaders and all of the people of Northern Ireland."

NOTES FOR EDITORS

The Police (NI) Act 2000 provides for the Secretary of State to legislate to renew the temporary provisions. Before doing so, he is required to consider the progress that has been made towards achieving a police service which is representative of the Northern Ireland Community. He is also required to consult the Policing Board. In considering whether to renew the provisions, the Secretary of State must take account of progress towards the achievement of a representative police service

Under section 47(1) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 (the "2000 Act"), the temporary provisions are:

Section 44 (5) to (7) of the 2000 Act

Section 45 of the 2000 Act

Section 46 of the 2000 Act

Article 40A of the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997

Article 71A of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998

The provisions will expire on 28 March 2011 and have been in place for ten years.

The Report of the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern

Ireland (the Patten Report) was published in 1999. It observed that only 8.3% of the RUC was Roman Catholic. The Commission noted that it was the imbalance between the number of Catholics/Nationalists and Protestants/Unionists which was the most striking problem in the composition of the RUC.

The Commission recommended (recommendations 120 and 121) that

all candidates who wished to join the police service and who reached a

specified standard of merit in the selection procedure should be placed in a pool from which an equal number of Protestants and Catholics would then be drawn for appointment. Paragraph 15.10 of the Patten Report specifically envisaged that one half of new recruits would be Catholic and one half "Protestant or undetermined". This arrangement is commonly known as '50:50 recruitment'.

Patten envisaged that such a model would quadruple the proportion of

Catholic officers within 10 years. This would take Catholic composition of

PSNI officers to between 29% and 33% within this timeframe, for which the critical mass of the organisation should be between 15% and 30%.