

**INCORE**

**COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF PUBLIC POLICIES TOWARDS  
IMPROVING INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

A paper prepared for the Review of Community Relations Policies

By

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The paper sets out to consider developments in policy and interventions related to improving community relations in other relevant jurisdictions. It has been prepared as a contribution to the Review of Community Relations Policy in Northern Ireland which was initiated by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister in early 2001.
- 1.1. It concludes that throughout the world there is very limited experience in this field and only isolated examples of practice. It refers as much to the failure of government to promote community relations activities as to the work that has been done, and suggests reasons why governments find it difficult to act in this area. Northern Ireland does lead the way in the range of activity and the evaluation of the impact of this activity.
- 1.2 By and large, governments only seem to become directly involved in supporting and even taking a more proactive role when there is some pressure to do so.
- 1.3. Government policies may actually hinder the improvement of community relations.
- 1.4 The approaches governments adopt will be influenced by its preferred form of inter-community relations: homogenisation, separate development, co-existence or pluralism.
- 1.5 If government perceives a problem of racial or ethnic harmony it will often adopt an approach which is more structural than human relations.
- 1.6 Structural changes on their own may not be sufficient to ensure inter-community harmony and may in fact exacerbate community tensions
- 1.7 The improvement of inter-community relations cannot be achieved solely at the level of personal interaction and understanding, and attention must also be given to the structural matters which influence inter-community relations
- 1.8 Governments are limited in the degree to which they can implement attitudinal change
- 1.9 Many initiatives bring together people at the level of influence leaders and the elites but they do not increase the level of contact, communication and understanding at the level of the ordinary citizen.
- 1.10. Government can in certain circumstances have an impact on inter-community relations by managing physical space and the spatial distribution of populations.
- 1.11. Educational is one area where the government is in a position to impact throughout the population.
- 1.12. Joint work on infrastructure is very visible and benefits a wide cross-section of



**- POLICY IN CONFIDENCE -**

society and as such it is one area where specific action at one level can have an impact in the wider community

- 1.13. Public bodies and government agencies may themselves contribute to inter-community conflict if their performance does not take account of cultural sensitivities
- 1.14. The state can identify and initiate processes and mechanisms which review each communities understanding of itself and the other community.
- 1.15. The media is an important tool for communicating with the wider society and influencing attitudes to community relations.
- 1.16. The state may be hampered in its ability to intervene in situations of inter-community tension if it is unwilling to recognise the legitimacy of the representatives of one or more of the communities involved.
- 1.17. Some of the limitations in the role and actions of government can be filled by non governmental organisations
- 1.18. Community Relations Councils can provide a mechanism which bridges the gap between the state and the ethnic communities which make up the state.



**ECONOMIC POLICY UNIT, OFMDFM**

**Public Expenditure Impact of a Polarised Society**

Northern Ireland is a deeply divided society. The most obvious expression of this division is the violence and civil unrest which have blighted the region since 1969. Prolonged periods of civil tension have created two distinct and separate communities in Northern Ireland. In certain areas this polarisation has become deeply entrenched, each community having its own separate education system, and in some instances separate public transport routes, community and health centres. A recent study of inter-community mobility by the University of Ulster found that 78% of Catholics and 77% of Protestants living in 'inter-face' areas of Belfast would not work in an area dominated by another religion. This social division, and the tensions and conflict that it causes, has reduced the cost effectiveness of public service provision to the province.

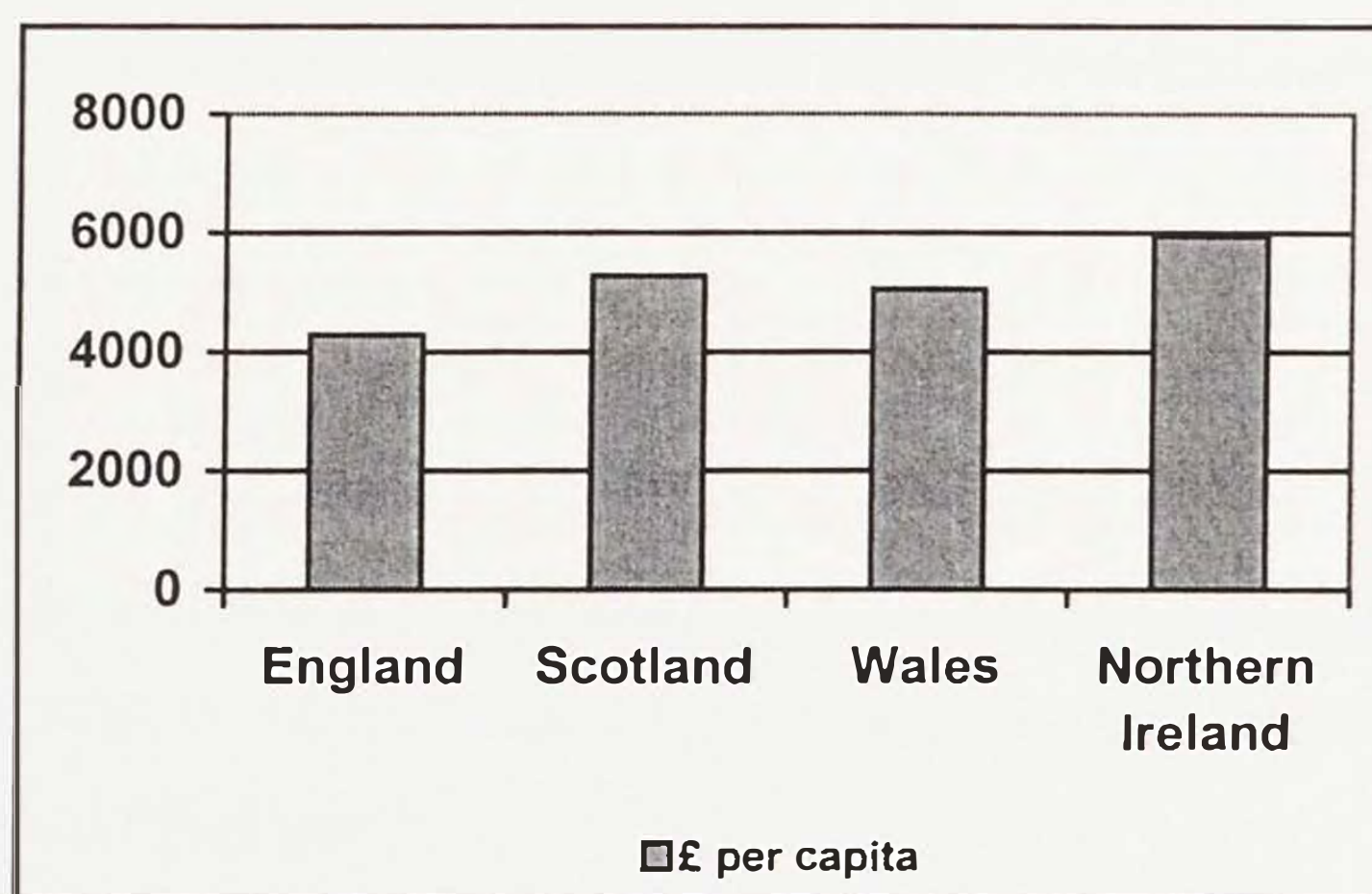
This paper aims to identify and, where possible, quantify the impact on Public Expenditure of providing public services to a polarised and separate community. The paper is presented in four sections. The first section provides a brief overview of the public expenditure system in Northern Ireland. The remaining sections outline the direct costs, additional costs and cost of duplication of public service provision in a divided society. Identifying and quantifying these costs proved a difficult exercise for departments, in many instances it was impossible to separate out the effects of a polarised society from the additional costs associated with social disadvantage, a phenomenon not particular to Northern Ireland.



## Public Expenditure

Public Expenditure on a per capita basis is higher in Northern Ireland than in any other country in the United Kingdom (figure 1). Northern Ireland receives 3.79% of UK Public expenditure to provide services for its 2.84% share of the UK population.

Figure 1  
**Identifiable Total Managed Expenditure Per Capita  
1999-2000**



In 2000/01 the Northern Ireland Executive had the responsibility for allocating a budget of £5,438m across departmental expenditure areas. Northern Ireland also receives additional funding (some £1,258m in 2000/01) for reserved issues such as Policing, the Prison Service and Forensic Services. This budget is outside the control of the Executive and is administered by the Northern Ireland Office. This paper will focus on expenditure within the control of the Northern Ireland Executive.

HM Treasury allocates Public Expenditure to the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the principle of parity of public service provision in each region of the UK. Northern Ireland's relative need for public expenditure is higher than the UK average as its population profile contains many characteristics which increase the cost of public service provision, for example age structure, unemployment levels and deprivation.



**- POLICY IN CONFIDENCE -**

This paper aims to identify areas of Public Expenditure within Northern Ireland which are a direct result of the region's polarised society and the associated tensions and conflicts. For ease of analysis, the costs are divided into three categories: direct costs, additional costs and the costs of duplicating services.

declined dramatically since the height of the troubles in the early 1970s. In 1970/71 there were 24 bomb explosions and 131 shooting incidents in Northern Ireland, 873 people sustained injuries as a result of the security situation and 7 people lost their lives. These incidents impose a significant financial burden on local public finances. The majority of these direct costs are contained within the reserved budget of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), however additional departmental expenditure has been identified in the following areas:

Health and Social Services

The most tragic consequence of civil disorder is injury and loss of life. In 2000/01 there were 436 civilian injuries as a result of civil disturbances. This compares to 332,940 inpatient deaths and discharges for Northern Ireland in the same year. Given these statistics it could be inferred any cost to the HPSS would only be of a very marginal magnitude.

There is also likely to be a financial burden imposed on the Health service for the treatment of victims of the troubles who have long term disabilities. In addition, prolonged peace has brought out suppressed trauma in many people, which may be a significant and growing cost to the Health Service.

Transport

The Department of Regional Development (DRD) set aside £250,000 per year in their budget to repair damage caused to road surfaces during civil disturbances. Buses are often targeted during times of civil disturbances imposing additional costs on the department; trains are destroyed less frequently.



## **Direct Costs**

The direct, and most obvious costs of a polarised community are those caused by civil unrest. The number of security incidents associated with civil unrest has declined dramatically since the height of the troubles in the early 1970s. In 1999/00 there were 24 bomb explosions and 131 shooting incidents in Northern Ireland, 878 people sustained injuries as a result of the security situation and 7 people lost their lives. These incidents impose a significant financial burden on local public finances. The majority of these direct costs are contained within the reserved budget of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), however additional departmental expenditure has been identified in the following areas:

### Health and Social Services

The most tragic consequence of civil unrest is injury and loss of life. In 2000/01 there were 486 civilian injuries as a result of civil disturbances. This compares to 332,940 inpatient deaths and discharges for Northern Ireland in the same year. Given these statistics it could be inferred any cost to the HPSS would only be of a very marginal magnitude.

There is also likely to be a financial burden imposed on the Health service for the treatment of victims of the troubles who have long term disabilities. In addition, prolonged peace has brought out suppressed trauma in many people, which may be a significant and growing cost to the Health Service.

### Transport

The Department of Regional Development (DRD) set aside £250,000 per year in their budget to repair damage caused to road surfaces during civil disturbances. Buses are often targeted during times of civil disturbances imposing additional costs on the department; trains are destroyed less frequently.



### Education

Civil unrest impacts in the Department of Education's expenditure directly through damage to property. Civil disturbances, which are either targeted directly at schools or which occur within their immediate vicinity, can cause extensive disruption to teachers and pupils, resulting in additional services such as supply teachers being required.

In 1998, the department spent £4.7m repairing damage caused to schools by arson attacks during times of civil unrest. The department also estimates that approximately a quarter of its £1m annual vandalism bill is a direct result of the security situation. The estimated cost of current civil unrest at the Holycross and Wheatfield Schools is £1.7m, £1.25m of which was financed by the North Belfast Executive Initiative. Civil unrest in Shankhill is estimated to have cost the Belfast Education and Library Board £518,000 between 2000 and 2002 and disturbances in Omagh are estimated to have cost the Western Education and Library Board £600,000 between 1999 and 2000.

In addition, the Omagh tragedy in 1998 resulted in £398,307 extra expenditure by the department during the period 1998 to 2000. This expenditure was mainly for Psychological support, supply teachers and consultancy fees.

### Housing

Public Housing is often located in the vicinity of conflict flash points and is frequently damaged during periods of unrest. This imposes additional maintenance costs on the Department of Social Development.



## Duplicating Services

Northern Ireland society has evolved into two very distinct communities. In certain areas of Northern Ireland this polarisation has become particularly pronounced. A recent study carried out by the University of Ulster found incidents of women in Belfast forgoing postnatal care for their children because the clinic is located in an area dominated by another religion. This limited mobility has resulted in many services, which could otherwise have operated from a single location, being duplicated in each community. The paragraphs below highlight duplicated services within affected Northern Ireland departments.

### Health and Social Services

When analysing services provided by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Community Health centres would be more likely to suffer duplication, given that they cover larger catchment areas which may not be containable within existing societal divides. North and West Belfast is usually cited as a Trust area which has to incur this type of duplication.

The Regional Development Partnership recently carried out a study into Health Facility Provision in North and West Belfast, which included a benchmarking exercise with health trusts in England. When benchmarked against Doncaster and Bradford, it was estimated that North and West Belfast requires two health facilities to service its population. There are currently nine facilities in the area. While this differential between service provision cannot be wholly attributed to a divided society, the paper found that in North and West Belfast people tended to use health facilities located in enumeration districts (EDs) where most of the population were co-religionists even when the facility was not the nearest in terms of distance.



### Transport

A polarised society limits the mobility of its inhabitants. Bus routes within densely populated areas of the province are often designed to avoid passing through areas of differing religious affiliation, reducing the cost- effectiveness of the service.

### Public Housing

Public housing, historically a contentious issue in Northern Ireland, has become highly segregated within the province. This segregation is currently causing problems of demand and supply for the Housing Executive. Demand for public housing is increasing from the Catholic community while demand from the Protestant community is declining. This results in waiting lists for public housing in Catholic areas while houses remain vacant in Protestant areas.

### Training and Employment

In the majority of cases, job centres have a sufficiently large enough catchment area to avoid being associated with one particular community, however there are notable exceptions to this rule. T&EA have indicated that in the Shankhill, Falls, and Andersonstown areas of Belfast and in Derry/Londonderry there is duplication of Jobcentres to ensure accessibility for all members of the community.

### Employment and Learning

A possible area of duplication in the Department of Employment and Learning is the two University Colleges offering Initial Teacher Training; Stranmillis and St. Mary's. These are both colleges of Queen's University Belfast. The additional costs imposed due to duplication of services are due to diseconomies of scale, as Northern Ireland would still require approximately the same number of teachers if there was a fully integrated education system in the province.



### Culture, Arts and Leisure

The provision of library and sporting services in Northern Ireland may be duplicated in certain areas to allow access for all members of the community.

### **Additional Costs**

The political unrest and polarised society creates an environment in which it is more expensive to provide public services. These additional costs arise due to the heightened security required in Northern Ireland, the poor image of the region and expenditure required to break down the social barriers between communities.

### Community Relations

The Community Relations Unit within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister was established to increase cross-community contact and co-operation and to encourage mutual respect, understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. This unit, created as a direct response to the polarised and divided society, has an annual budget of approximately £6m.

### Tourism

The television images of violence and disruption in Northern Ireland have stunted the development of the Northern Ireland tourism industry. Figure 2 below shows how the number of visitors to the Republic of Ireland has accelerated since the late 1980s while the number of visitors to Northern Ireland experienced a sharp decline in the early 70s and has only recovered slowly. It has been suggested that the rapid growth in the South was not mirrored in Northern Ireland due to the poor image of the region.

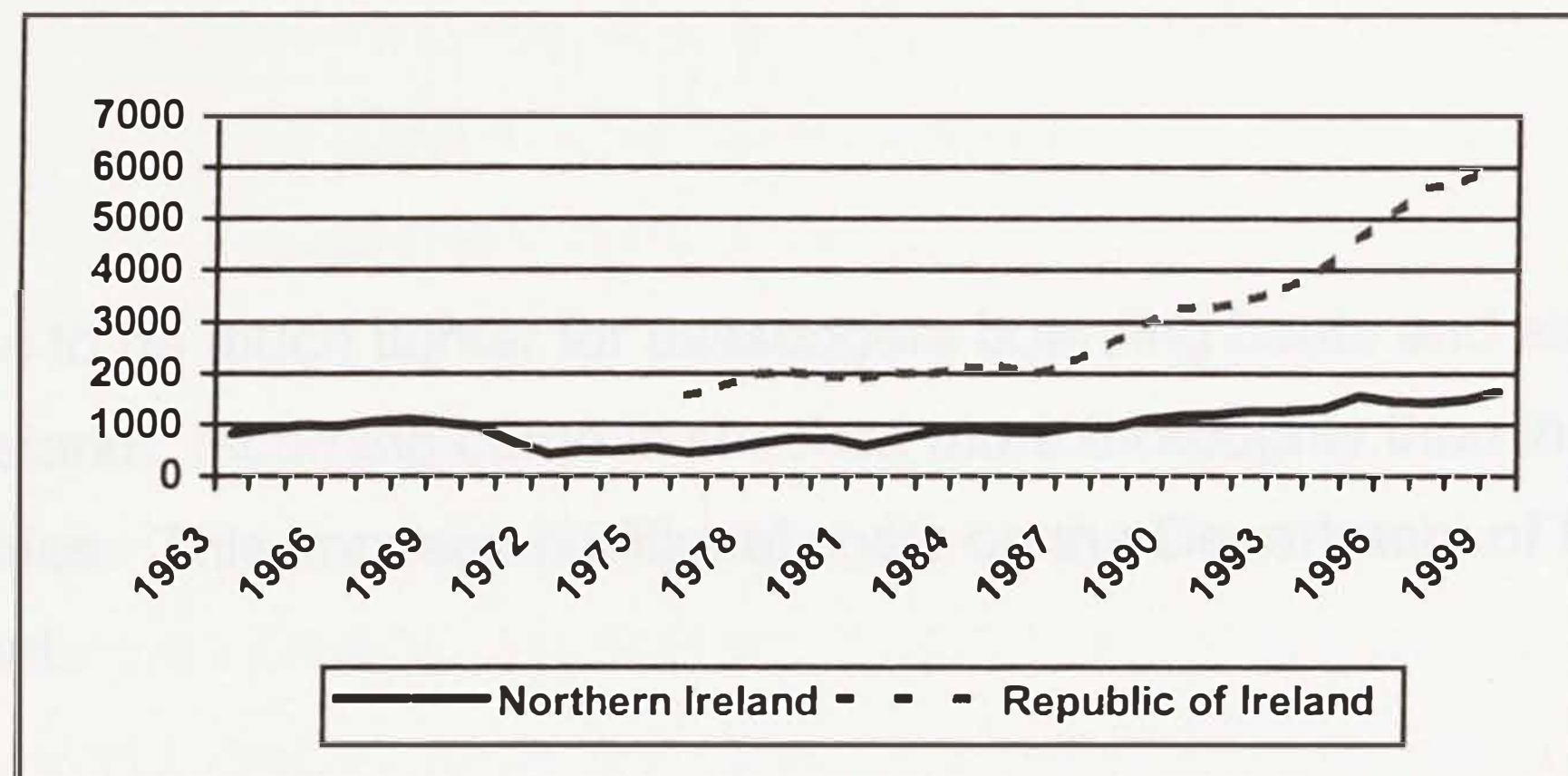
Expenditure on tourism in Northern Ireland is significantly higher than in England. In 2000/01 the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) spent approximately £8.00 per capita promoting Tourism in the region



while within England equivalent expenditure by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and Local Authorities amounts to £3.00 capita.

Figure 2

**Visitor numbers in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland  
1963 - 1999**



Industrial development

The Industrial Development Board (an agency within DETI) has a substantial budget for attracting mobile investment to Northern Ireland. This function is significantly hampered by the poor image of Northern Ireland abroad.

It is difficult to isolate what proportion of DETI expenditure is a direct result of a polarised and separate community, DETI estimate that approximately £25m of their annual budget is dedicated to compensating for Northern Ireland's poor image.

Culture Arts and Leisure

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure has experienced loss of revenue from its attractions such as the Armagh Planetarium as a result of political unrest. This loss of revenue has resulted in the need for public expenditure to bridge financial deficits.

Education

The Department of Education has expanded some of services due to the pressures of community unrest. These services include counselling and



psychological services, community relations programmes, cross-community teacher contact schemes, teacher substitution for absences related to stress and additional youth programmes. While most of these costs are difficult to quantify, DE estimates that community relations programmes in schools cost £3.5m per annum while additional youth programmes cost £250,000 per annum.

### Transport

Security has to be much tighter for passengers boarding boats and airplanes in Northern Ireland. Incoming cargo is checked more thoroughly than in many other countries. This imposes additional costs on the Department of Regional Development.



## Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to establish the impact of Northern Ireland's polarised and separate community on Public Expenditure. There is no question that there are financial implications of providing public services to a divided society, however these implications are difficult to isolate and quantify. This paper categorised the costs of a polarised society under three headings: Direct costs, Costs of Duplication and Additional Costs.

The direct costs of a polarised society are the financial impact of civil strife. The majoring of these costs are contained within reserved expenditure areas and are therefore borne by the Northern Ireland Office, however a number of Northern Ireland departments are also face additional capital costs when property is damaged and services are disrupted.

The cost of duplicating services within the two communities affects more departments. Inter-community mobility is low in some regions, particularly so in densely population, socially disadvantaged regions. People are unwilling to cross into areas perceived as dangerous to avail of public services, and in response these services have been duplicated in both communities. Services affected by this duplication include community Health Centres, Job Centres, Public Housing and Public Transport.

The divided community within Northern Ireland creates an environment where provision of public services is more expensive and additional community relations services are required. These additional costs span a large number of departments and range from programmes introduced to break down social barriers between communities to additional expenditure required to attract visitors to the region.

This exercise identified a lack of robust and comprehensive information within departments on the Public Expenditure costs of a polarised society and



suggests the need for a programme of research to identify and monitor such costs.