

---

**PSNI**  
**EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**  
**RECRUITMENT OF POLICE OFFICERS**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

---

Published March 2008

# CONTENTS

<b>1.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>1.1</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>1.2</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>BACKGROUND TO THE PSNI RECRUITMENT PROCESS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>DATA COLLECTION AND CONSULTATION</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>3.1</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>3.2</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>KEY FINDINGS</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	
	<b>5.1</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>5.2</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>5.3</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>5.4</b>	<b>13</b>
	<b>5.5</b>	<b>15</b>
	<b>5.6</b>	<b>15</b>
	<b>5.7</b>	<b>15</b>
	<b>5.8</b>	<b>16</b>
	<b>5.9</b>	<b>14</b>
	<b>5.10</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>CONCLUDING COMMENT</b>	<b>17</b>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Prior to comment on the EQIA it should be noted that since 2001 the PSNI has undergone and is still undergoing unprecedented organisational change in general terms and is now one of the most accountable organisations in Europe. Following implementation of recommendations contained in the report of the Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland the recruitment process has evolved accordingly, whilst remaining on target to meet compositional deadlines. It continues to focus on the areas of addressing under representation, equality and diversity.

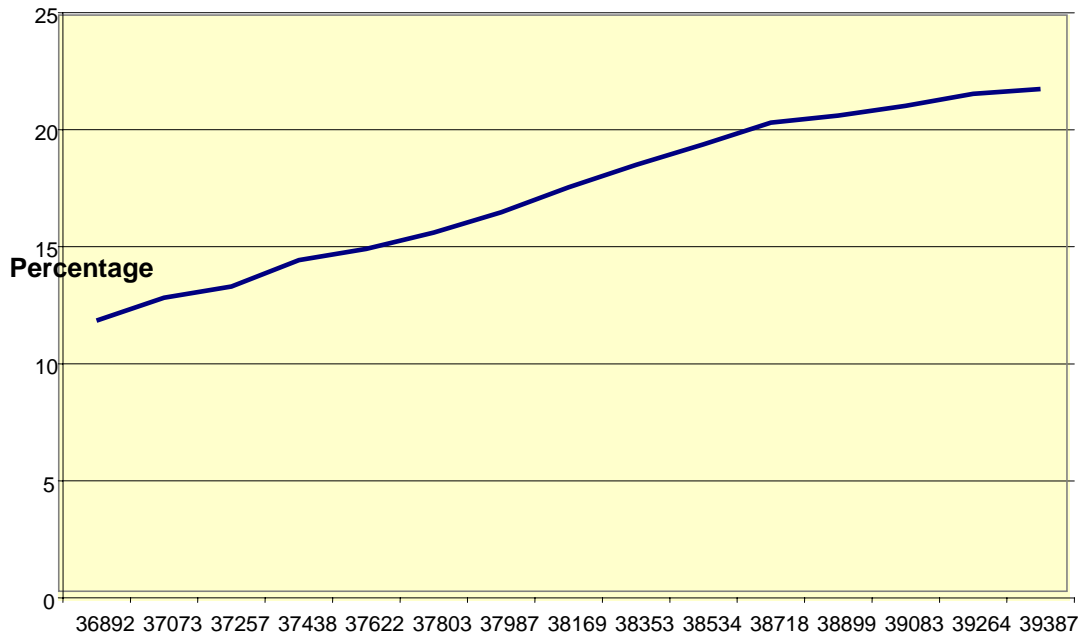
The present workforce composition reflects an increase in females, people from a Catholic and ethnic minority community backgrounds and application of employment related legislation, e.g. the Disability Discrimination Act. The charts below reflect the increase in female and catholic workforce representation.

This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) relates to the Recruitment of Police Officers as administered by recruiting agents on behalf of the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI). It follows an EQIA Consultation Paper presented for public consultation in April 2007.

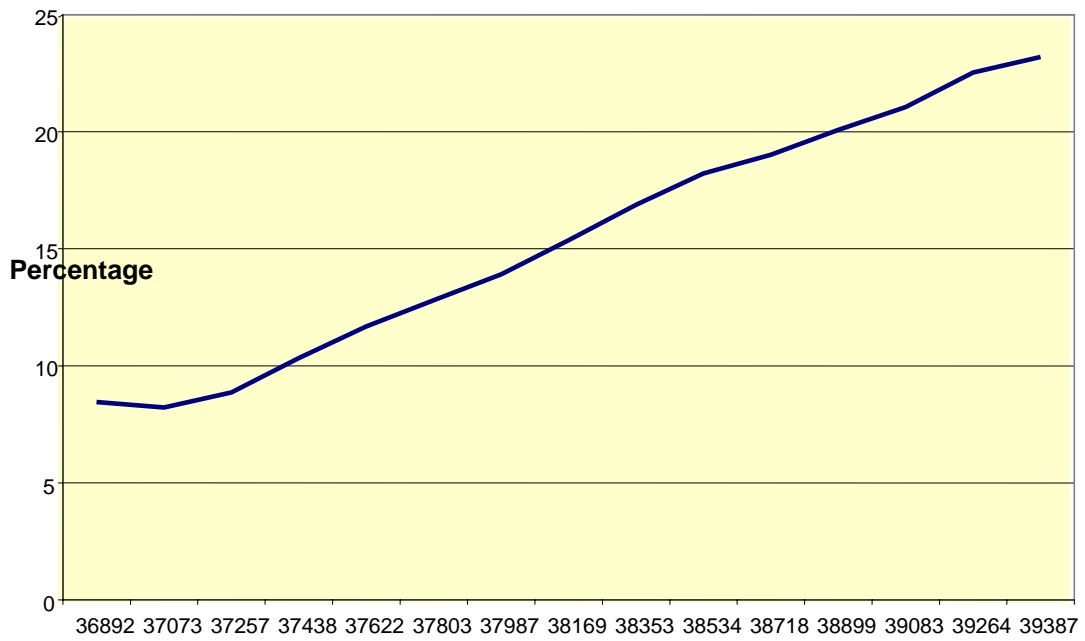
The outsourcing of the recruitment function was implemented as a result of recommendations contained in the report of the Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland in 1999. However, this EQIA is based on data from one specific recruitment campaign, Campaign Seven, as at the time of analysis it was the most recent campaign for which a full set of statistics were available.

A small number of written responses to the consultation process were received. In addition, a number of responses were collated through meetings and focus groups organised as part of the consultation process. In coming to the final decisions as presented in this report, PSNI considered the responses from the consultation and set those along side existing data.

**Percentage Female Strength January 2001 to Date**



**Percentage Catholic Strength January 2001 to Date**



## 1.1 Results

Category	Findings
Gender	There has been a specific effort to target women, which has resulted in increased applications and increased proportions of women coming through the competition. Overall this policy has had a positive impact on equality of opportunity for women by increasing the number of female officers within PSNI, however the lower success rates of women at medical should be further considered.
Age	Candidates in the 30-34 age groups were most likely to be successful, with the oldest and youngest candidates least likely to be successful. There is evidence to suggest that this pattern is repeated through IST and AC although at medical the youngest candidates also have high levels of success and the oldest candidates are least likely to pass.
Religion	There has been a specific effort to target advertising at Roman Catholics, which has resulted in increased applications from this group. While Roman Catholics are still less likely to apply than non Roman Catholics and are slightly less likely to be successful the overall impact of the policy has been to promote equality of opportunity for Roman Catholics.
Political Opinion	Political opinion is not sought by PSNI and there is no plan to seek such information in the future. No specific data is available to assess political opinion in regards to recruitment. While it could be assumed by proxy from community background, such data would be inaccurate and invalid.
Marital Status	People of different marital status perform differently throughout the different stages. However, overall the proportion of people that are successful is broadly similar for separated, widowed, married and single people. This suggests that the policy impacts equitably across these groups.
Racial Background	People from minority ethnic backgrounds make up less than one per cent of the Northern Ireland population. Advertising and awareness activities have particularly targeted this group. The data for Campaign seven suggests that when people from minority ethnic backgrounds apply they were much less successful on average than other groups. This suggests that the policy may have a differential impact on people of different racial backgrounds, however, the rate of un-notified withdrawal among ethnic minority applicants from Northern Ireland were slightly higher in C7 than for white applicants (37 per cent compared with 34.5 per cent). When all candidates are considered, the rate of un-notified withdrawal among ethnic minority candidates increases to 72 per cent, but remains at 37 per cent for all white applicants.
Dependants	No data is available to assess the impact of the policy on this group. This should be addressed by reviewing the equality monitoring procedure.
Sexual Orientation	The monitoring data from competition 10 indicates that people from the LGBT community are applying and being successful in gaining entry to the PSNI. While not all appointments have been made for this competition the data to date indicates consistent or higher numbers of this population being appointed to the merit pool. It could be construed that this indicates an increasing trust in the process on the basis that the identification of sexual orientation does not appear to be perceived as a hindrance to application.
Disability	The data relating to disabilities from competition 8 indicated that out of the 1.81% of all applicants identifying themselves as having a disability 1.39% of all appointees had a declared disability. This is only a variance of 0.42% and there are only three appointees left, none of whom have declared a disability. While not all appointments have been made for competitions 9 and 10 the variance to date is 0.16 and 0.1% variance respectively from applicants to appointees declaring a

	disability. This reflects a positive outcome in that the declaration of a disability does not preclude appointment.
--	---

## 1.2 Decisions

As a result of this EQIA PSNI have decided to implement the following actions:

### Monitoring

Action - From 2007 all applicants and appointees, both police and police staff, have been requested to provide data/information in respect of all nine Section 75 categories. This will form part of their personal record, if successful, and steps are being taken to allow all employees to access and update their personal record including information in respect of equality. This will also allow all nine Section 75 categories to be monitored and potential impacts identified.

Action - PSNI will examine the possibility of instigating a system to monitor feedback forms in terms of Section 75 categories which will provide the capacity to carry out analysis.

### PSNI Image, Profile and Communication

PSNI will take account and share with its recruitment agency the findings in regards to image/profile and communication suggestions from this EQIA and take the following actions:-

Action – PSNI in liaison with its recruitment partner agency will continue to review the content of its communication mediums to ensure information is accurate, understandable (font, etc.) and informative for all categories.

Action – PSNI will continue to liaise with ethnic minority, female and LGBT categories to ensure appropriate publications, mediums and content are used to reach and inform potential applicants from all categories. The offers to assist in distribution of relevant material offered during this EQIA will be discussed and appropriate action taken.

Action – PSNI will actively seek to raise the profiles of officers from ethnic minority, female and LGBT backgrounds through articles in relevant publications and joint strategies with relevant representative groups and organisations to inform members of these groups.

Action – PSNI in partnership with its recruitment agency will continue to meet and engage with all categories to ensure data/information is accurate and the views and needs of underrepresented groups inform the recruitment process.

## Religious Background

Action – PSNI will continue to process appointments on a 50/50 basis in line with required legislation.

Action – PSNI will act on the findings of the research into retention.

Action – PSNI in partnership with its recruitment agency will research and analyse any trends in regards to success rates for Catholic, Non-Catholic community and unknown backgrounds.

## Men and Women in General.

Action – PSNI in liaison with its recruitment agency partner will continue to review and assess the medical assessment process to ensure it reflects the requirements of the role and is conducted fairly and equally.

Action – PSNI will monitor the Gender Action Plan and Shared Future Strategy to ensure their progress in regard to female career development and support is maintained.

## Racial Background

Action - PSNI will continue to liaise with ethnic minority representatives and examine strategies etc. to improve the application and attendance rates of ethnic minority applicants.

Action – PSNI in partnership with its recruitment agency will actively research the use of additional recruitment initiatives to improve application rates and success rates for candidates with specific focus on the Initial Selection Test. A definitive initiative will be established for the next recruitment campaign and results of its effect analysed.

Action – PSNI will continue to seek ways in which to raise awareness of the needs and concerns of ethnic minority groups both internal and external to the organisation. The success of these will be monitored through the various formal and informal contacts with individuals and organisations within those groups.

## Vetting

Action – PSNI will seek to establish a robust and comprehensive vetting policy which will co-ordinate the vetting process and address issues such as the vetting of EU citizens and foreign nationals as potential appointees to the PSNI. This policy will be audited to ensure Section 75 compliance.

## Dependents

Action – The strategies/programmes planned and initiated to assist those with dependents will be monitored and assessed as to the benefits or otherwise on this category of applicant.

It is anticipated that many of the concerns identified in respect of the process such as length of time taken, etc. will be addressed as a result of some of these actions, i.e. vetting and medical for potential appointees only will impact directly on length of process.

Specific policies and strategies which deal with enhancing equality of opportunity are also being progressed and it is anticipated that these will have a particular impact on the image and profile of the PSNI in terms of a career choice. The Shared Future Strategy will provide an overarching and comprehensive guide to ensure the PSNI progresses such policies and strategies.

It should also be noted that these actions are set against the improving police/public compact, other actions and internal and external policies the service is establishing to enhance their relationship with all groups within the Northern Ireland community.

## **2. BACKGROUND TO THE PSNI RECRUITMENT PROCESS**

The present recruitment process is based on the recommendations of the Independent Commission for Policing (Patten Commission) established as a result of the Belfast Agreement. Of a total of 175 recommendations sixteen related to recruitment key among which were:

- Police should contract out recruitment of both police officers and civilians and there should be lay involvement including community representatives, on recruitment panels.
- The recruitment agency should advertise imaginatively and persistently, particularly in places likely to reach groups who are under-represented in the police.
- The agency should advertise beyond Northern Ireland, in the rest of the United Kingdom and in the Republic of Ireland.
- All candidates should continue to be required to reach a specified standard of merit in the selection procedure. Candidates reaching this standard should then enter a pool from which the required number of recruits can be drawn.
- An equal number of Protestants and Catholics should be drawn from the pool of qualified candidates.

The legislative provision for the process is contained within Sections 44 and 45 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. As a result of the recommendations and the legislation the Consensia Partnership currently holds the contract to provide a recruitment selection service for police trainees to enter PSNI.



The aim is to ensure that the recruitment process is independent, objective and transparent and that PSNI is reflective of the community which it serves. Its overall aim is:

*To design and administer an effective, efficient and fair recruitment and selection process for PSNI to produce a precise number of police trainees to an agreed standard and at a predetermined time.*

### 3. DATA COLLECTION AND CONSULTATION

#### 3.1 Data Collection

Data was collated utilising the following sources:

Source	Data
PSNI Human Resources	<p>Numbers of Trainees Appointed.</p> <p>Background to Police Vetting Policies.</p> <p>Number of Candidates failing to meet Vetting Requirements Campaign One to Campaign Four.</p>
Consensia Partnership	<p>Equality Monitoring Data for Campaign Five on candidates at each stage of the process by Age, Gender, Community Background, Marital Status and Racial Background.</p> <p>Feedback from IST and AC attendees on Fairness of Campaign Five Selection process.</p> <p>Feedback and Complaints from Individual candidates for Campaign Five.</p> <p>Feedback from candidates who were un-notified withdrawals from ISTs for Campaign Five.</p> <p>Feedback from Candidates on Fairness of IST and AC for Campaign Five.</p> <p>Qualitative Feedback from Outreach Focus Groups.</p> <p>Analysis of candidates failing to pass the Medical Assessment by Gender for Campaign Five.</p> <p>Equality Monitoring Data from Campaigns One to Four on candidates at each stage of the process by Age, Gender, Community Background, Marital Status and Racial Background.</p>
PSNI Occupational Health	<p>Qualitative data relating to the impact of VSS criteria on equality categories.</p> <p>Background information on PSNI Medical Requirements.</p>

PSNI Equality and Diversity Unit	Quantitative data relating to Section 75 categories and workforce composition. Background information of equality strategies and programmes.
----------------------------------	--

In 2005 all applicants for posts as PSNI Trainees were asked to complete an equality Monitoring Form. This asked candidates to record their:

- age
- gender;
- marital status;
- ethnic origin; and
- community background.

The above information allowed for an assessment of successful candidates at each stage of the competition to be made by:

- religious belief (using community background as a proxy);
- gender;
- racial background; and
- marital status.

Equality monitoring data is not available to permit quantitative analysis of candidate's success by:

- Political opinion
- Whether they have dependant responsibilities.

While the equality aspect of this EQIA is based on Campaign 7 equality monitoring has taken place in respect of persons with disability and those without for campaigns 8, 9 and 10 and for persons with a different sexual orientation for campaign 10. This data was included where appropriate and used to inform the EQIA.

### **3.2 Consultation**

A consultation process was employed which attempted to reach and engage not only those the policy impacts on but those who had an interest in and direct involvement with Section 75 categories. A twelve-week period of consultation was set-aside for this EQIA, which ran from the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2007 to 27<sup>th</sup> April 2007.

The following actions were taken:

- Letters were distributed to 500 individuals and organizations informing them of the consultation and availability of relevant consultation documents.
- Public notices were placed in the *Belfast Telegraph*, *Irish News* and *News Letter* newspapers, inviting comment in accordance with good practice.
- Direct accessibility to IT formats via the Home Page was offered on the PSNI's website.
- Offers for individual consultation meetings were made available. One request was made.
- PSNI offered the availability of suitable copies of documents in diverse formats and in a timely manner. No requests were made.
- A number of meetings/interviews (12) and focus groups (2) were sought and arranged involving various individuals and organizations etc. that represent Section 75 categories. The following organisations were represented at meetings/interviews:

Islamic Centre  
Chinese Welfare Association  
Indian Community Centre  
Polish Welfare Association  
Youthnet  
Youth Action  
The Rainbow Project  
Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative  
Craigavon Travellers Support Community  
Ethnic Minority Police Association  
Gay Police Officers Association  
Department of Employment and Learning  
Committee for the Administration of Justice  
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

The focus groups involved two groups of people who had experienced the recruitment process and been successful. One group was made up of nine female participants while the other was made up of seven male and two female participants. In addition, the EQIA was referred to the Independent Advisory groups representing the minority ethnic population and the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender community.

#### **4 KEY FINDINGS**

While the Equality Commission made specific comment and suggestions in respect to the methodology applied to the EQIA, the key findings of the consultation process were as follows:-

- Monitoring - Full monitoring of all Section 75 categories should be ascertained. More analysis could take place of feedback data if Section 75 monitored.
- Gender Differences -The EQIA has shown that there are variances in respect of success rates between males and females.
- Vetting - Some concerns were raised in respect of vetting and its impact on recruitment with specific reference to the length of process.
- Under-representation -There were a number of issues and concerns which were common to all groups who could be considered as under-represented. It was suggested that there was a lack of knowledge of recruitment process, criteria etc across most under represented categories. The lack of profile of under-represented categories among police officers was identified as an influencer on potential candidates. The general image of police and public perception was identified as an influencing factor.
- Medical Assessment - The poor success rates of medical assessment for females were raised. The lower rates of application in comparison to males were also identified.
- Age - Concerns were raised in relation to the application of a restrictive upper age criteria.
- 50/50 Rule - Some respondents felt the 50/50 rule affected their success in gaining appointment. Others felt the vetting process caused problems for candidates due to length of process. Factors which affected the success rate in passing the IST were identified.
- Dependents - The need for support for applicants with dependents was highlighted.
- Trends - One respondent felt there may be a bias within the test and assessment process which caused the lower success rates for applicants of Catholic background. It was also felt that trends of success rates should be carried out.

**The submissions made by respondents both written and findings from meetings/interviews can be viewed at Appendix III of the full Equality Impact Assessment Report. PSNI responses to the written responses are also included.**

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This EQIA has been applied utilizing the data and information available from the sources identified. It should be noted that the applications for PSNI recruitment campaigns remain high with approximately 10,000 – 12,000 applying each year. This EQIA was based on analysis of recruitment campaigns 1 – 7 with specific examination of campaign 7, at the time of analysis the most recent complete campaign. At present the recruitment process is required to appoint 440 officers per year. This is done so through a twenty-six week cycle and logistics dictate a rolling 5 week induction programme which the training centre can accommodate. Whenever the organisation has reached a level whereby it is no longer replenishing officers who leave by reason of severance, and numbers recruited will be smaller in number, then the process can be examined and potentially more specific needs based training can be assessed.

Generally much of what has been raised by the EQIA and the respondents to the consultation are already being addressed. Actions to address others will be taken where considered necessary. Applying those results to the findings from the public consultation PSNI comment as follows:-

### **5.1 Monitoring**

Data/information in respect of all Section 75 categories has been limited for some campaigns. Some categories have been analysed as a result of available data/information recorded upon application. The lack of full recording is reflected within the organisation and PSNI are taking steps to rectify this. As the actions in this area state from June 2007 all applicants and appointees, both police and police staff, have been requested to provide data/information in respect of all nine Section 75 categories. This will form part of their personal record and steps are being taken to allow all employees to access and update their personal record including information in respect of equality. This will also allow all nine Section 75 categories to be monitored and potential impacts identified.

### **5.2 Vetting**

Vetting along with medical assessment is in line with current legislation and applied to all those who achieve entry to the merit pool regardless of appointment or not. It is a separate process which is utilised and required by the recruitment process. However, some respondents made reference to issues around vetting.

That legislation is now being changed to require only those who are offered appointment to undergo medical assessment and vetting. This should reduce the length of the overall recruitment process. The vetting is necessary again to ensure only those suitable for the role are appointed. There is an independent appeal system available for the vetting process.

The vetting of EU Citizens and other foreign nationals is difficult to apply due to lack of appropriate mechanisms or protocols with other jurisdictions. PSNI

are taking steps to instigate a robust and comprehensive vetting policy which will also address these problems.

### 5.3 PSNI Image, Profile and Communication

There were a number of issues and concerns which were common to all groups who could be considered as under-represented. These can be grouped into the following areas:-

- **Image and Branding** – A number of respondents have referred to the branding and image factors which can have an impact on under-represented groups considering police as a career. This is often the result of lack of information or a perceived profile of police within those groups. The perception of police by all groups was felt to be particularly relevant to all categories when considering policing as a career choice. The historical influence was recognised by all groups and with the recent political advancement it is anticipated that the negative aspects of policing will diminish as relationships improve with various communities.

There is evidence of this in the survey findings of the Policing Board Omnibus Survey for April 2007<sup>1</sup>. Statistically significant results were found in response to questions in respect of the performance of the police, e.g.

To the question “*How much confidence do you have in the PSNI’s ability to provide an ordinary day to day policing service for all the people of Northern Ireland?*” more than four out of five respondents (83%) had some, a lot, or total confidence in the police’s ability to provide a day to day policing service for everyone in Northern Ireland. This compared to 79% in October 2006.

While the survey was restricted to analysis based only on a Catholic and Protestant background, all respondents to the EQIA referred to how these perceptions had an influence on how they perceived the police. It could be said that these results show that public perception in this area is changing in a positive direction. This should help in enhancing the perception of police across all categories.

- **Profile** – All of PSNI’s recruitment campaign advertisements feature officers from minority ethnic backgrounds. Publication of advertisements to coincide with holidays or festivals, e.g. Diwali Festival – advert in Zee TV, readership across UK and Ireland. Attendance at ethnic minority festivals, i.e. Indian Mela, Chinese New Year and Polish Community Festival, attendance at Gay Pride festival. “Round table” talks with senior members of the Islamic Community in regards to recruitment issues have been held and similar ones with the Chinese Community are being sought. The recognition and

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/omnibus\\_survey\\_july\\_2007.pdf](http://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/omnibus_survey_july_2007.pdf)

consultation with internal staff associations, Ethnic minority and Gay, also help inform the organisation's relationship with these groups and the regular Independent Advisory Group meetings in respect of age, disability, ethnic minority and LGBT add to that process.

- **Lack of Knowledge of Recruitment Campaigns and Process** – A wide ranging media plan attempts to reach all Section 75 Categories through the use of extensive distribution via local/national press (NI, ROI and UK) and minority publications and web magazines. A DVD which sets out the requirements of the role and what can be expected of trainees is being prepared and will be accessible through the PSNI website. The concerns raised in respect of some females awareness etc of the recruitment process are known by the organisation and the offers made by some groups to assist in communicating such knowledge will be acted upon. In the last campaign there were several publications in the LGBT community including specific female lesbian web magazine (diva.co.uk) which were used to advertise the recruitment campaign. The raising of the profile of females has been noted by the organisation.

**In regards to issues specific to particular categories which appear to be affected by the recruitment process, PSNI would comment as follows:**

#### **5.4 Men and Women Generally**

The EQIA has shown that there are variances in respect of success rates between males and females in regards to the medical assessment.

The Visual Acuity criteria for eligibility at entry level for a trainee Police Constable/Patrol Probationer are based, in part, on the requirement for officers to use firearms. Visual Acuity is the most common reason for rejection at the medical stage for both males and females. The review of the statistics over 11 recruitment campaigns shows that this is a consistent finding. There are some gender differences for rejection with males more likely to fail the colour vision test. This is reflected in the analysis of the pre-employment screening data and is the result of a genetic pre-disposition with up to 8% of men but only 0.5% of females having some degree of colour defect.

Analysis also shows that females are more likely than males of the same age group, to have experience of Mental Health problems and are more likely to be rejected from the process than males. This has been demonstrated in General Practice scientific studies of morbidity in the community, e.g. a longitudinal study of the mental health of adults living in private households in Great Britain indicated that women were more likely to have received treatment for a mental health problem or used services of all types than men: 29 per cent of women had either received treatment or services compared

with 17 per cent of men (Singleton and Lewis, 2003).<sup>2</sup> The outcome of the pre-entry medical assessment process reflects the findings of those studies. When the all female focus group was provided with the reasons for failure of medical they all thought the higher than male failure in the mental health and nervous system areas was understandable. Each candidate is assessed on their own merit against the Home Office pre-employment medical standard and the PSNI Role Profile for Police Constable/Patrol Probationer.

Like all assessments there is an element of subjectivity but that is applied by a registered medical practitioner and set against the criteria. Provision is made for appeal appealing the medical assessment.

PSNI feels the present medical criteria reflect the standard required for the role and does not propose taking any action in this area. The physical and medical assessment is continually monitored and has been altered where physical tests etc have been found to discriminate against some categories, e.g. gender. It will continue to monitor the assessment process and seek views of the medical profession on its validity.

More females are applying for the police than previously and the percentage of female appointees increased to 20.4% in 2005/06 an increase of from 18.8% the previous year. The Most Similar Force (MSF) average is 23.4% but it is anticipated that PSNI will achieve this percentage by 2008. The rate of applications from females has increased up to its present rate of approximately 36%. Research into reasons and barriers to females applying not only for entry to the organisation but also promotion to higher ranks is ongoing in many police organisations. It may well be that the role of a police officer does not appeal to all females and the 36% may be the most realistic ceiling of female applicants. The findings from this public consultation go some way in helping to identify reasons for the differential in applications from females. There is some evidence that the branding and image of PSNI is a pertinent factor e.g. perceived military image (uniform cited as an example) and male dominance of the organisation. It was suggested that the profile of females in advertising may not be significant enough to attract females. The Lesbian Advisory Service Initiative suggested that female lesbians may not be accessing information about the role of a police officer and the recruitment process.

It is clear that the females applying and being appointed reflect a range of backgrounds. In response to a consultation query a cross correlation of data/information in respect of females in terms of age, marital status and dependents indicates that the majorities of females appointed are single and in the age group of 21-29 and just under 30% indicate they have dependents. When compared with males it indicates that a higher number of females in the

---

<sup>2</sup> Better or worse: a longitudinal study of the mental health of adults living in private households in Great Britain: Report based on surveys carried out by the Office for National Statistics in 2000 and 2001 for the Department of Health and the Scottish Executive Health Department, Singleton, N and Lewis, G, (2003) Crown Copyright



age group of 21-24 (31.37% of females) apply than their male counterparts of this age group (14.88% of males) a variance of 16.49.

Examination of campaign 7 indicated that 28.43% of the females appointed from this campaign indicated they had dependents. In Campaign 8, the first campaign which asked applicants to record disability, 23% of female applicants indicated they had a disability.

In relation to potential barriers and adverse impacts for females the medical criteria was identified as reflecting a variance between males and females being successful in passing the medical. This has been referred to above.

In 2003 PSNI introduced a Gender Action Plan which is directed towards:

- To investigate and address existing and future policies, procedures and practices which inhibit or exclude females from playing a full role within the Police Service of Northern Ireland.
- To examine the working practices of the organisation and propose actions which will enhance the work/life balance while ensuring operational effectiveness.

Since its inception the plan has been progressed with the establishment of a Women's Police Association, the PSNI joining the British Association of Women Police (BAWP), the introduction of a flexible working policy are all examples of how the organisation is addressing a number of the issues which impact on the decision of females to apply for the PSNI. There are a number of other programmes and policies which will add to these, e.g. the provision of Child Care Voucher Scheme due to commence in September 2007.

In addition to this a Shared Future Strategy targets women's needs and sets targets towards which the organisation is committed to achieving.

## **5.5 Age**

Concerns were raised in relation to the application of a restrictive upper age criteria.

PSNI have sought advice and made the decision to raise the upper limit of the age criteria for future campaigns to 57 years.

## **5.6 Religion**

Reference was made by one respondent to the possible bias of the process due to lower success rates for Catholic background applicants. PSNI ensure that the recruiting agent takes great care in the design of tests and assessments to ensure that there is no community background bias present, and all assessors are trained in equality and diversity issues. In addition, the independent nature of the process with oversight from independent observers etc. helps ensure this. PSNI will research the possible trends in respect of success rates to identify reasons for any potential difference in this area.

The application of the 50/50 rule is directed towards addressing the under-representation of Roman Catholics in the organisation. It is clear that this is correcting this imbalance with the expectation that the targets set will be addressed by 2012. This may now be accelerated by the all inclusive political climate which is beginning to formulate and its benevolent impact on the community/police compact. PSNI are now being invited to attend career fairs in nationalist areas where previously not invited, i.e. Newry, Londonderry/Derry, Magherafelt and have been well received. Generally links are being enhanced and further developed with Catholic maintained academic institutions. As recruitment continues to apply the 50/50 rule and more officers from a Catholic background are promoted the profile and image in this respect will improve. Positive action may not need to be applied though this will be decided by robust and effective monitoring and evaluation.

It is also clear that there is an anomaly with retention of Roman Catholics either during training or in the probation period. This is at present being researched by an Occupational Psychologist and the PSNI Equality and Diversity Unit in liaison with the Northern Ireland Equality Commission.

### **5.7 Racial Background**

When compared with the ethnic minority representation in the general NI population ethnic minority groups are under-represented by a small percentage (0.46% of NI Economically Active Population - 0.32% of PSNI). While this is not a significant variance PSNI is keen to recruit more members of ethnic minority groups. The PSNI, in conjunction with the agent, has been engaged in various outreach mechanisms, and is encouraged by a steady increase in the application rates across all ethnic minority groupings. Despite this increase, statistics show that a significantly high number of applicants fail to turn up at the Initial Selection Test. Follow up research by our recruiting agent has failed to identify a common cause for withdrawal. However, there are a number of factors which this EQIA has identified as potential barriers for members of ethnic minority groups joining the PSNI. There is anecdotal evidence that some of these are related to socio/cultural variables, which include the perception of police as a career and a profession by the family, the community and culture. The image of the police and the lack of ethnic officer profile within the PSNI are also suggested as reasons for low application rates by some ethnic minority groups.

Despite a high application rate of Polish applicants in the last campaign none of them were successful in achieving entry to the PSNI. The need for a working knowledge of English, both written and spoken, appears to be a major factor. This was referred to by some respondents who suggested that a pre-test training may help. Other UK police organisations have introduced recruitment initiatives directed towards increasing ethnic minority applications. While many are targeted towards enhancing profile and outreach with these groups specific strategies are focused on aiding access to and success in the recruitment process, e.g.

- Access Courses - directed towards minority applicants already short-listed through paper sifting stage these courses help candidates prepare for the assessment centre and identify particular police competencies that candidates need to focus on.
- Recruitment Support Officers – Full-time these officers work with both LGBT and ethnic minority applicants to assist them with concerns regarding the application process.

While ethnic minority applicants have reasonable success in the Assessment Centre their success rate in the Initial Selection Test success is not as good. Examination of potential aids or support to assist ethnic minority applicants will be carried out and assessed.

Problems associated with vetting some applicants from this category have been referred to in the vetting section above. In addition to this a number of strategies, programmes, seminars and campaigns in liaison with representatives of ethnic minority groups have been organised to address issues around hate crime and police response. These help raise the profile of how PSNI address the needs of the ethnic minority community. The introduction of an Independent Advisory Group with which the organisation can consult also reflects this commitment.

Internally the establishment of an ethnic minority coordinator is being progressed and this will raise the profile of ethnic minority officers from an organisational perspective.

### **5.8 Persons of different sexual orientation**

While the EQIA did not identify anything that was felt to impact adversely on members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual community the consultation did highlight some issues for this community. These mostly related to issues around information and communication. Actions referred to in respect of Image, Profile and Communication address most of these. In respect of the concerns regarding the LGBT community perspective of police response, a number of strategies, programmes, seminars and conferences established in liaison with representatives of the LGBT community have been organised to address issues around hate crime and police response. The success of many of these has been highlighted by the LGBT community, e.g. Foyle District Command Unit's recognition and response to hate crime in Londonderry/Derry.

In addition to the informal contact that takes place on a regular basis Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) have also been established which are consulted on issues relevant to the groups they represent.

The provision of a coordinator to advise and assist with the LGBT community within the organisation is being progressed and this will assist in raising the profile of the organisation.

### **5.9 Persons with dependents and persons without**

The references made in respect of potential impact on those with dependents generally related to gender and marital status. The introduction of schemes, e.g. Child Care Vouchers, Flexible Working Policy, Work Life Balance programme is directed towards provision of support for those with dependents. The provision of Child Care Vouchers will also be made available to trainees.

### **5.10 Persons with a disability.**

Reasonable adjustments are made for those who reach a position suitable for appointment and indicate they have a disability. A Disability Discrimination Panel examines the disability and assesses how it will impact on the individual's ability to perform the core requirements for a police constable/probationer. The panel will consider whether any adjustments are reasonable. Examples of adjustments made have related to applicants with diabetes and physical impairment. These applicants were successful in achieving appointment.

## **6. CONCLUDING COMMENT**

At present the recruitment process is required to appoint 440 officers per year. This is done so through a twenty-six week cycle and logistics dictate a rolling 5 week induction programme which the training centre can accommodate. Whenever the organisation has reached a level whereby it is no longer replenishing officers who leave by reason of severance and numbers recruited will be smaller in number then the process can be examined and the establishment of a more specific needs based training programme can be assessed.

It is anticipated that many of the concerns made in respect of problems with the process such as length of process, etc. will be addressed as a result of the above actions, i.e. vetting and medical for potential appointees rather than all in the merit pool has the potential to impact directly on length of process.

Specific organizational policies and strategies which deal with enhancing equality of opportunity are also being progressed and it is anticipated that these will have a particular impact on the image and profile of the PSNI in terms of a career choice. The Shared Future Strategy will provide an overarching and comprehensive guide to ensure the PSNI progresses such policies and strategies.

It should also be noted that these actions are set against the improving police/public compact, other actions and internal and external policies the service is establishing to enhance their relationship with all groups within the Northern Ireland community.

**All the actions proposed by the PSNI as a result of this EQIA will be monitored and evaluated.**

