



Northern
Ireland
Office

POLICE (NORTHERN IRELAND) ACT 2000 – REVIEW OF TEMPORARY RECRUITMENT PROVISIONS

Summary of Responses to Public Consultation

22 March 2011

Introduction

1. In November 2010, the Secretary of State launched a public consultation seeking views on the proposal to end the temporary 50:50 recruitment provisions. The current provisions expire on 28th March 2011. The consultation closed on 4th February.

2. 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

3. The Government has considered all of the responses and concluded that the current provisions should not be renewed. This document sets out a summary of the responses and, where appropriate, a Government response. This document is available on the NIO website: <http://www.nio.gov.uk>. Copies may be made without seeking permission. Hard copies are available on request from:

Northern Ireland Office
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4. If you have any concerns or complaints about the consultation process you should contact NIO’s co-ordinator, Martin Adams, on (020) 7210 6458, by email consultationcoordinator@nio.x.gsi.gov.uk or by post:

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We would like to thank all of those who have responded to the consultation.

Summary of Responses

5. On launching the consultation the Secretary of State noted that he was minded not to renew the temporary recruitment provisions. He invited views on this proposal. The current provisions expire on 28th March 2011.

6. A total of 162 responses were received from a variety of interested individuals and organisations, categorised as follows:

Churches	1
Councils	2
District Policing Partnerships	2
Voluntaries/Charities	1
Policing Family	3
Members of the public	139
Rights/Equality Groups	6
Political Parties	3
Others	5

The names of those organisations and groups who responded to the consultation is set out at Annex A.

7. Of these responses, 152 (94%) were in favour of letting the provisions lapse. Six respondents (4%) were against ending the provisions. Three respondents did not express a definite view. One respondent was in favour of letting the provisions lapse in respect of PSNI officer recruitment, but called for the provisions to be retained for PSNI support staff.

Views Expressed In Favour Of Not Renewing the Provisions

8. Nearly all respondents who did not wish the provisions to be renewed stated that recruitment to the PSNI should be made solely on the basis of merit and without consideration of community background. A number of respondents argued that the proportion of officers from a Catholic community background fulfilled the Patten requirements.

Views Expressed Against Not Renewing the Provisions

View Expressed

9. A number of respondents called for the retention of the provisions until Catholic composition of PSNI officers is aligned with that of the population. At the 2001 Census the Catholic population stood at 44%.

Response

10. There has been a significant change since 2001 when Patten noted the vastly dissimilar religious composition of police and the community. The police service today is much different and this serious imbalance no longer exists. 29.76% of officers are now from a Catholic community background, almost a third of serving officers. The Government envisages that with time Catholic representation in the PSNI will continue to move towards a closer reflection of the community as a whole.

View Expressed

11. Respondents noted that Catholic composition of support staff remains lower than that of police officers and called for the provisions to continue for support staff.

Response

12. Catholic composition of support staff currently stands at 17.97%. The measures have not altered composition of support staff to the same extent as that of officers as they apply only where six or more vacancies are advertised. Retaining the special measures would therefore not have a significant bearing on the composition of support staff.

13. The PSNI is committed to ensuring that the whole workforce is representative of the community. Vacancies are advertised across a range of media in order to attract applicants from a wide range of backgrounds. Applications are welcome from those who are underrepresented in particular roles, and welcoming statements invite applications particularly from female, Catholic and ethnic minority applicants. In addition the PSNI use

specialist media to ensure suitably skilled and qualified individuals are targeted irrespective of their community background.

View Expressed

14. Some respondents commented on the lower representation of Catholics at senior levels of the PSNI.

Response

15. With the increase in the percentage of Catholic constables, there is a greater pool of Catholic officers available for promotion and Catholic representation at more senior levels is likely to increase over time. For example, at the beginning of this year, Catholic representation at levels above Sergeant was 14.9%, a 50% increase from 2002. However, restrictions on promotion are currently in place so it is unlikely this trend will change markedly until these restrictions are lifted.

16. The intergovernmental agreement on policing between the British and Irish governments allows members of An Garda Síochána to apply for posts at ranks above Inspector level in the PSNI. This is one way in which Catholic composition in senior ranks can be increased.

View Expressed

17. Respondents referred to the retention of Catholic recruits, with new Catholic officers more likely to leave service than those from a non – Catholic background.

Response

18. The numbers of Catholic recruits leaving the PSNI should be set against the vast majority who remain in service and contribute to the policing of Northern Ireland.

19. Research conducted around leavers concluded there was no single obvious reason for the rates of Catholic officers leaving the Service being higher than non-Catholic counterparts. PSNI will continue to monitor reasons for leaving.

Other views

20. Concerns were raised about the representation of women and ethnic minorities in the PSNI.

Response

21. The purpose of the provisions is to address community background composition of the PSNI. However the Government welcomes the increase in female officers composition from 12.6% in 2002 to its current level of 26.11%. It also notes that the percentage of ethnic minority officers at 0.47% reflects that of the working population.

Conclusion

22. In reaching its view on the future of the temporary provisions, the Government has considered the submissions made to the consultation. The Government has also had regard to the progress that has been made towards securing that membership of the police and police support staff is more fully reflective of the community in Northern Ireland.

23. 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.

24. The Government believes that maintaining a police service which is reflective of the society it polices is as important as ever. We want to see this progress continue and for Catholic representation in the PSNI to grow further over time. Patten stressed 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. With responsibility for policing now resting with locally elected representatives everyone must play their part.

Annex A

Groups and organisations which submitted a response to the consultation

British Irish Rights Watch
Castlereagh Borough Council
Committee on the Administration of Justice
Coleraine District Policing Partnership
Democratic Unionist Party
Department of Justice
Disability Action
North Down Borough Council
North Down District Policing Partnership
Northern Ireland Catholic Council on Social Affairs
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Police Ombudsman
Police Service of Northern Ireland
Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Sinn Fein
South East Fermanagh Foundation
Superintendents Association
Ulster Human Rights Watch
Ulster Unionist Party