

Consultation paper on a Victims and Survivors Service

(August 2009)

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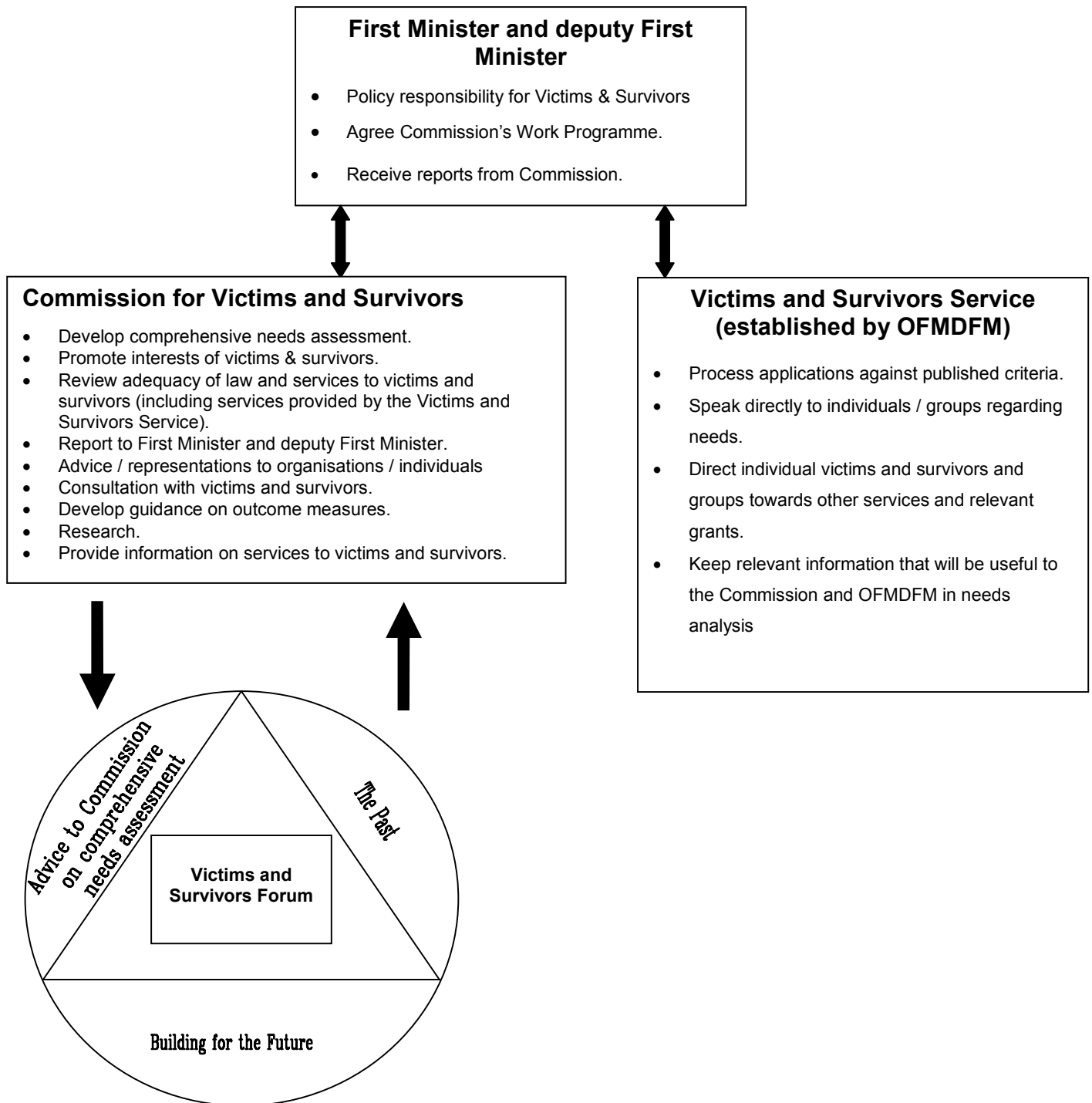
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Victims & Survivors Service

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to set out proposals for the establishment of the Victims and Survivors Service referred to in the consultation paper “Outline draft strategic approach for Victims and Survivors” published in August 2008 <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/outline-draft-strategy-for-victims-and-survivors-consultation-paper.pdf>. It is envisaged that the Victims and Survivors Service will replace all current arrangements under which OFMDFM provides funding to the sector. It is also intended that the new Service will be more comprehensive and responsive to the needs of individual victims and survivors and the groups and organisations which work in this area.
- 1.2 This paper outlines the current financial provision made by government and suggests that there is a need for a new approach which better meets the needs of victims and survivors. The paper goes on to discuss the proposed vision for the Victims and Survivors Service, outlines proposals regarding the establishment of the Service and discusses how the Service will deliver.
- 1.3 The “Outline draft strategic approach for Victims and Survivors” closed for consultation in October 2008. In the draft strategy it states that government should adopt a Victim and Survivor centred approach built around:
- the newly established Commission for Victims and Survivors;
 - a Victims and Survivors Forum; and
 - a new Victims and Survivors Service.

The following diagram illustrates the proposed relationship between these three bodies and the First and deputy First Minister.



- 1.4 The Victims and Survivors Service will be responsible for providing support for individuals and groups and will provide that support in response to assessed and agreed need. The draft strategy links the work of the Commission and the Forum to the new Service. It sets out that there should be a comprehensive assessment of need which will be taken forward by the Commission for Victims and Survivors and it is intended that this assessment will involve the Forum, when it is established.
- 1.5 While there have been various needs assessments carried out by victims groups and Trauma Advisory Panels at a local level, there is no needs assessment which is reflective of the complete range of needs across Northern Ireland which is evidence based and stated in a comprehensive and coherent manner. Moreover there is no system under which the changing needs of victims and survivors can be identified and recorded in a consistent manner which can inform service delivery and funding decisions.
- 1.6 The draft strategy points out that the comprehensive needs assessment is essential to the work of the Commission in addressing its statutory responsibility to comment on the effectiveness of services provided to victims and survivors. In relation to the new Victims and Survivors Service a comprehensive needs assessment is also essential to the creation of a sound basis for funding the work of victims and survivors groups and other non-statutory groups providing services in this area. Work already carried out by the Commission for Victims and Survivors indicates that a comprehensive assessment of need will be a complex exercise and will take some time to develop. It will also be an evolving exercise as needs change over time.

2 Background

Funding provided by OFMDFM

2.1 OFMDFM currently provides for Victims and Survivors via three main funding streams:

- Core Funding Scheme;
- Development Grant Scheme; and
- The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund

2.2 The Core Funding and Development Grant Schemes are operated on behalf of OFMDFM by the Community Relations Council which acts as an Intermediary Funding Body. The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund is an independent charity. The general position with regard to all three funding streams is discussed below.

2.3 The Core Funding Scheme (CFS) was launched in October 2002 and was intended for use by groups working with victims and survivors. It had an initial budget of £3.2 million spread over two years. Applications were assessed against set criteria and awards made on a two year basis. Groups were assessed and placed into specific categories:

- Voluntary groups with low costs and no paid staff. Typical costs are for monthly meetings and small events;
- Self Help groups that have normally grown from a voluntary background but now have staffing and office costs. These

groups often provide training support, advocacy and advice and alternative / complementary therapies; and

- Parallel Service Providers, that is organisations providing professional counselling support services. Typical costs for which support is provided are rent, heat / light, insurance, a full time co-ordinator and administrative support.

2.4 There are currently forty six victims and survivors groups that receive core funding the majority of which fall under the 'self help' category.

2.5 The CFS was originally due to end in March 2005 and since then there have been year on year extensions pending a new victims and survivors strategy. The effect has been that funding, while supporting much good work within groups, has not kept pace with the changing needs of victims and survivors. Many groups feel that they have not been able to take forward work because they have not been operating in a secure financial framework. This relates in particular to limitations on their ability to plan ahead over a number of years, which is of particular importance when working with those in need of longer term support. Groups have indicated that they need a much clearer indication as to what funding they are likely to receive over a period of time in order to plan ahead with confidence.

2.6 The Development Grant Scheme (DGS) was launched in tandem with the CFS. Its aim was to provide the resources for groups to deliver projects and programmes with the security of having their core costs met by the CFS. Originally the scheme had a budget of £750,000 over two years and groups were assessed against set criteria. In recent years the budget for the scheme has increased to cover the introduction of new strands of funding.

The scheme this year has a budget of £1.7 million and the strands of funding are:

- Project based activities;
- Befriending training and delivery; and
- Respite care and support.

2.7 Like the CFS, the short term nature of the funding in the DGS, and the uncertainty surrounding it, has led to some groups not developing projects as they would have liked to. Moreover the maximum amount for an individual grant under the DGS was £10,000 which had a tendency to lead to small scale fragmented work. Again, as with the CGS the sector needs a much more stable financial environment to enable planning for the longer-term. This is of particular importance in victims and survivors work where uncertainty over funding can have a particularly adverse effect on people suffering the effect of post traumatic stress.

2.8 As well as funding groups that work with victims and survivors, OFMDFM also provides financial assistance to the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund (NIMF). The NIMF provides assistance to individual victims and survivors many of whom are not associated with any group or organisation.

2.9 The NIMF is an independent charity which was set up in December 1999 in response to the recommendations contained in the Bloomfield Report. Over the years the Fund has received support from a variety of sources although government has been its primary source of funding. Responsibility at government level for the provision of financial assistance to the NIMF passed from the NIO to OFMDFM in September 2006. The Fund provides practical help for individuals who have suffered as a result of the conflict

and has operated 17 different schemes of support since its inception. The Fund currently provides assistance through the following schemes:

- Short Break Scheme;
- Education and Training Scheme;
- Back to School Scheme;
- Discretionary Scheme;
- Over 60's Scheme;
- Home Repairs Scheme; and
- Chronic Pain Management Scheme.

2.10 The NIMF is primarily funded by OFMDFM. As noted above it was previously funded by the NIO. It has also received funding from the Republic of Ireland. Since 1999 the NIMF expenditure has exceeded £12 million. With regard to individuals who have sought help from the Fund the latest figures show that 27,527 applications have been processed from a total of 8,541 individuals.

2.11 It is recognised that the NIMF to date has been a useful source of support for individuals. At the same time it is acknowledged that the NIMF has not always had the capacity to meet the constantly changing needs of victims and survivors either through lack of funds, or due to the way in which the Fund is structured. A particular problem inherent in the grant making process is that individuals, many of whom suffer the effects of trauma, have to make repeated applications. The danger here is that long term needs are addressed in a piecemeal fashion in response to an application process which can itself be traumatising and which has limited capacity to address longer-term needs.

2.12 In Bertha McDougall's 2007 report she recommended that a new fund for individual victims and survivors of the conflict should be set up and that the NIMF should be phased out in conjunction with the development of a new fund.

Other funding streams

2.13 In addition to OFMDFM funded schemes victims groups can also apply for European funding through the Peace II and Peace III programmes. Peace II ran from 2000-2006 with funding released in two phases. Peace III will run from 2007-2013. OFMDFM has implemented an "interim capacity fund" to help groups manage the transition between the Peace II and Peace III programmes. OFMDFM is the accountable department for the following Peace III Priorities:

- 1.1 "Building positive relationships at the local level" € 140.9M
- 1.2 "Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past" € 50M
- 2.2 "Key institutional capacities developed for a shared society" €40M

2.14 Theme 1.2 is aimed at groups working with victims and survivors. It is divided into 3 strands:

- Addressing the Past in Public Memory;
- Support for Participation; and
- Securing the Future.

2.15 This funding is and will remain separate from the work of the new Victims and Survivors Service. It is however important for the Service to take account of the Peace III programme as many if not all of the groups funded by the Service will also be seeking European funding. The two funding streams while separate will be inter-related and account will need to be taken by the Victims and Survivors Service of resources provided to victims and survivors groups through other schemes.

3 Vision for the Victims and Survivors Service

3.1 The “Outline draft strategic approach for Victims and Survivors” states that the Victims and Survivors Service will use appropriately qualified staff to:

- process applications against clearly published set of criteria;
- speak directly with individual victims and survivors and groups to identify with them what needs they have;
- direct individual victims and survivors and victims and survivors groups towards other services and to relevant grants; and
- keep relevant information that will be useful for the Commission and OFMDFM in needs analysis.

3.2 A key part of the vision for the new Victims and Survivors Service is the role envisaged for those practitioners already carrying out valuable work with victims and survivors in the voluntary and community sector. It is our intention that the substantial investment in work in this area already made is built upon. The Service will have a core group of staff to administer the Service and process applications from groups. It will also have a small team of qualified people to carry out individual needs assessments against

published criteria; and will be able to draw on suitably qualified people within victims groups capable of assessing individual needs against published criteria (under contract to the Service).

- 3.3 We believe that an opportunity now exists to deliver a more coordinated response to the needs of victims and survivors by harnessing all of the skills, talents and experience built up over the past number of years. A properly funded and managed service based on clearly identified needs has the potential to make a real difference to the lives of victims and survivors. A Service built on these principles should also allow us to measure the impact that we are having both at an individual and societal level.
- 3.4 What we are laying out in this document therefore are proposals for the management element of the proposed Service. We believe that the foundations for the delivery mechanism are already in place. It will be a key role for the new Service to ensure that the delivery is coordinated and adequately funded.
- 3.5 *Vision, Aims and Objectives for the Service.*

Once established the new Victims and Survivors Service will replace the current funding arrangements provided under the CFS, DGS and the NIMF. It will be responsible for the provision of support for both individual victims and survivors, and, groups working with victims and survivors. It will sit at arms length from government in its day to day operations, and will allocate funding in a transparent and open way in accordance with clear and published criteria.

Vision Statement

“The Victims and Survivors Service will provide support for all victims in a co-ordinated and efficient manner. It will listen and be responsive to the needs of victims, and, will work closely with the Commission for Victims and Survivors and the Forum, once established, to improve the life of victims and survivors. “

Aims for the Service

The aims for the Victims and Survivors Service are as follows:

- Better co-ordination of funding;
- Clearer links between support provided and actual needs;
- More efficient use of resources;
- Sustainability;
- To make use of and improve upon good practice in the sector;
- To obtain better information on outputs;
- To collate information on individual needs; and
- Better evaluation of service provided.

Objectives

The Objectives for the Service are that victims and survivors will have:

- Access to high quality services;
- Support relevant to their needs;
- Services delivered in appropriate locations; and
- A commitment to the long term if required.

3.6 The following paragraphs are intended to place the Service in the context of the work of the Victims and Survivors Commission which will be responsible for assessing the effectiveness of the new Victims and Survivors Service as part of its general remit to keep under review how well services are meeting the needs of victims and survivors.

3.7 The new Victims and Survivors Service will provide funding to individual victims and survivors and to voluntary groups and organisations which provide support for them on the basis of assessed need. This will entail work at 2 levels.

- The service will carry out an assessment of the needs of individuals through the use of appropriately trained staff. It will be able to use suitably qualified staff in victims and survivors groups under contractual arrangements. The assessment will be of those individuals in contact with the new Service as a result of self referral, or referral by another agency, including the Commission for Victims and Survivors. The intention will be to make a holistic assessment of each person's needs (accounting for families and carers where appropriate) and to put together a package of appropriate support (including referrals to other agencies and groups where appropriate).
- At a strategic level a comprehensive assessment of the needs of victims and survivors will be carried out by the Commission for Victims and Survivors (in liaison with the Victims and Survivors Forum, when it is established). This assessment will be used to inform the appropriate level of funding for voluntary groups and organisations working in this area and will be kept

under review so that it takes account of changing needs. The intention is that the Service will be able to commission services in response to the assessed need, carried out by the Commission, and that any group or organisation will be required to relate its activities to the comprehensive assessment in applying for funding.

4 Cost of Victims and Survivors Service

- 4.1 The new Service will be needs led and may need to be expanded over time. However it is intended that the administration costs of the Service will be offset by resources currently deployed in the operation of current funding Schemes. It currently costs around £600,000 to administer the existing schemes through CRC and NIMF. Therefore it is envisaged that there will be no additional cost to administer the new Service.

5 Specification for a new Victims and Survivors Service

- 5.1 The following is the outline specification for a Victims and Survivors Service.

Support for Individual victims and survivors

- 5.2 With regard to support for individual victims and survivors the new Victims and Survivors Service will use professionally qualified staff to:
- (a) carry out an assessment of an individual's overall needs, following a referral, using staff who are trained

in dealing with people who may be suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

- (b) Put together a 'package' of help in response to a holistic assessment of need which might include financial assistance, practical help, befriending and various types of therapeutic support.
- (c) Make referrals to voluntary, community, private or statutory agencies which provide specific services.
- (d) Purchase specialist professional support for the individual where this is both necessary and practicable and the need cannot be addressed through existing statutory or voluntary services.
- (e) Monitor the position to ensure that any objectives for the support provided are being met and to take account of changing needs (due to age or changes in personal circumstances) and to avoid any re-traumatisation associated with having to repeatedly detail and give evidence on the loss or injury of a relative etc.
- (f) Retain information on need which over time will help inform the strategic assessment of need referred to in paragraph 3.7 above. This will include information on 'unmet need' which is not collected under current application based arrangements.

Support for Victims and Survivors groups and other voluntary and community groups providing support for victims and survivors

5.3 With regard to the funding of Victims and Survivors groups and other voluntary and community organisations providing support for victims and survivors the new Service will:

- (a) invite tenders for services from victims and survivors groups and other voluntary and community organisations with reference to the evidence based assessment of need carried out by the Commission for Victims and Survivors.
- (b) Commission services from victims and survivors groups and other voluntary and community organisations in response to tenders received on the basis of rolling three-year contracts reviewed annually to take account of changing needs and the work of the Commission for Victims and Survivors.
- (c) Monitor the performance of funded organisations against their contractual obligations and against any standards on outcomes and standards of services produced by the Commission for Victims and Survivors.
- (d) Ensure against duplication of funding by reference to the evidence based assessment of need carried out by the Commission, together with the promotion of collaborative work between groups and others, where practicable and consistent with the need for individuals to feel safe.

Complaints and Monitoring of the Victims and Survivors Service

- 5.4 The new Service will be required to establish its own complaints procedure which will enable individuals, groups and other organisations to make complaints or representations about the operation of the Service. Complaints and representations about the Service may also be directed to the Commission for Victims and Survivors.

6 Accountability of Service and oversight of Service by Commission

- 6.1 The most appropriate model for a Victims and Survivors Service is discussed at section 7 below and the detailed arrangements regarding monitoring will follow the guidelines set out by the Northern Ireland Civil Service. Although the Service will be responsible for its day to day operations, in all cases OFMDFM will be accountable for the financial arrangements for the Service and for ensuring that all financial arrangements are in accordance with the principles of “Managing Public Money”.
- 6.2 The new Victims and Survivors Service will fall within the remit of the Commission for Victims and Survivors as part of its overall responsibility for keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services for victims and survivors. The Commission will be expected to monitor at a strategic level the development and operation of the Service and to comment on its effectiveness in addressing needs.

7 Establishment of Victims and Survivors Service

- 7.1 This section details proposals for the creation of the core management function of the Victims and Survivors Service. As indicated previously the Service will have a core staff who will effectively manage the Service. The Service will make use of trained in-house staff and a network of approved bodies and individuals, providing services to victims and survivors, to deliver the support required. The Service will commission an appropriate care package for the individual or group concerned based on their assessed need. It will assess the needs of groups in line with the comprehensive needs assessment provided by the Commission. It is proposed that the new Victims and Survivors Service will be constituted as a Non-Departmental Public Body.
- 7.2 A NDPB would operate at arms length from government. It could operate flexibly and be responsive to changing needs. It would have a separate existence allowing it to enter into contracts in a straightforward way. The structure for the Victims and Survivors Service would mean that the day to day decisions are independent as they are removed from Ministers and Civil Servants. A NDPB would require statutory provision and would enable accountability and monitoring arrangements to be clearly established. It would be necessary to make legislation to provide for the creation of the NDPB which would take approximately 12 months. However, a NDPB would ensure independence as well as making sure that the body is entirely accountable to the democratic institutions. It would provide the independence from government that the Service needs to be effective, helping to ensure a better future for victims and survivors, but retain full democratic accountability of the use of public funds.

7.3 During the transitional period in which the Service will be established, funding for the NIMF, core funding scheme and development grant scheme will continue. This funding will be phased out gradually as the new Service comes into operation.

7.4 The process of establishment of the Service can be split into 2 parts:

- putting in place the required legislation and other modalities; and
- set up of Service and Service commencement.

It is anticipated that overall it could take 12 months to establish the Service, including the consultation period for this paper. The following are the main steps that must be completed for each part:

(i) Putting in place the required legislation & other modalities

Victims and Survivors Service Paper out for consultation

Legislative process (including consultation period)

(ii) Set up of Service and Service Commencement

Practical steps for establishment of NDPB to include: Accommodation & Location, Financial Management Requirements, Board members & Staff and Corporate Governance arrangements

It is anticipated that the establishment of the Service will be taken forward by an inter-agency, multi-disciplinary Implementation Group. It is recognised that many of the practical steps for establishment of a NDPB can and will be carried out in parallel with the legislative process. While the Service is being established transitional arrangements will be put in place to ensure that existing services for victims and survivors are maintained and where possible enhanced.

8 How the Service might work in practice

8.1 The Annex to this paper provides examples of how the Service might work in practice. This is intended to illustrate how we expect the Service to operate. While the following case studies are for illustration purposes only, they are representative of real issues that impact on the lives of victims and survivors.

9 Equality Statement

9.1 In line with commitments in its approved Equality Scheme, the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) is committed to adhering to the principles of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 when reviewing and developing policy.

Assessment of impacts

9.2 Equality is an important issue for this department. We are determined to address all forms of inequality, and ensure that fairness, inclusion and equality of opportunity is built into all our policies.

Background to Section 75

9.3 Under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 there is a legal requirement for Public Authorities to consider the possible impact of all their decisions on 9 equality categories and also how to promote equality of opportunity and good relations in all areas of our work.

9.4 We must consider how to promote equality of opportunity in relation to the following nine equality categories:

- religious belief
- sexual orientation
- political opinion
- gender
- racial group
- disability (those with a disability and those without)
- age
- dependency (those with dependants and those without)
- marital status.

9.5 We also must consider how to promote good relations in respect of 3 groups:

- religious belief
- political opinion
- racial group.

Background to Screening

9.6 The screening process is used to identify policies or decisions which may have a significant impact on, or consequence for, people including those in any of the 9 equality categories. If, during the screening process it is decided that a policy or decision has significant issues relating to equality, it is then necessary to carry out a more detailed Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).

Consideration of mitigating measures or alternative policies

9.7 The department has completed its Equality Screening process. **The screening that has been carried out has been based on a limited set of data and is not definitive enough to draw conclusions on adverse impacts. We will therefore conduct a full Equality Impact Assessment in parallel with the consultation.**

Feedback

9.8 Please let us know your views on any aspect of this strategy which may have an impact upon any of the 9 equality categories to identify any differential impacts and / or promote equality of opportunity and good relations. We will conduct a separate consultation on the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment.

Copies of the document

9.9 This document can be accessed on the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister website, www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk. However, if the report is not in a format that suits your needs, please contact us at the address below:

Victims Unit
Block 5 Knockview Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SL
Tel: 028 9052 8560
Email: info@victimsni.gov.uk

1. How an individual might access the service directly.

Case Study 1

In the late 80's Mrs A's husband was killed in a troubles related incident. Mrs A never spoke to anyone about how she felt in the years after the incident happened. Instead she concentrated on looking after her young family which kept her very busy. She did not seek any assistance from anyone. She simply got on with things and tried to bring her family up in the best way she could.

Some 20 years on her family has grown up and she is now finding it hard to cope with every day life on her own. She is feeling depressed and lonely and doesn't know what to do. Worried about her mum Mrs A's daughter encourages her to contact the new Victims and Survivors Service that she has recently heard about. Mrs A agrees and calls the Service. An appointment is made for her with a member of their in-house team who is trained to make an assessment of Mrs A's needs.

During this initial meeting the representative of the Service is able to talk to Mrs A about her life and how she has been affected by what has happened to her. The Service representative explains to Mrs A the various ways in which the Service can offer to help her such as, counselling and befriending, the opportunity to meet other people who have been through similar experiences and the possibility of learning new skills or starting a class. The Service has found from past experience that these types of activities can help to improve a person's confidence and social interaction. Mrs A works with the Service to determine which course of action is most appropriate for her.

Annex

Case Study 2

Mr B is married with 3 children. He was paralysed in the 1990's as a result of a troubles related incident. As a result of his injuries he was unable to keep the job he had been employed in up until that date. The resulting loss of income meant that the family were unable to keep up the mortgage payments for the family home resulting in the family moving into rented accommodation. His wife became his main carer and has remained as such to this day. She herself took up part-time work to help with meeting the family's bills and living expenses.

Mr B is a member of a victims group who has a member of staff that is working under contract with the Victims and Survivors Service. Mr B discusses his case with this person. After this initial meeting the Service, in agreement with Mr B and his family decide upon an appropriate course of action.

The Service feels it is important for an assessment of the families benefit entitlements to be carried out. The Service administration team take this forward for the family working with the Social Security Agency (SSA) and others to ascertain if they are entitled to any state benefits. They also make Mr & Mrs B aware of respite care options that are available which might prove helpful in their situation. They also make Mr & Mrs B aware of the other options available to them such as counselling and befriending.

The Service arranges a follow up meeting for 4 weeks time to get an update on progress for Mr & Mrs B.

2. How a victims group might access the Service.

Case Study 3

Group A is small victims group. The group has tried in the past to help its members by applying to the Community Relations Council's core funding and development grant schemes. In the past they have had to apply for funding on an annual basis which has meant that their ability to carry out any long term planning has been hampered.

Under the new arrangements the Group will draw up a 3 year plan identifying the work it intends to do. The group will need to relate its plans to the comprehensive needs assessment carried out by the Commission. The Service will consider the groups plan in the context of the comprehensive needs assessment, other services in existence and other services planned in the same area.

The Service in conjunction with the group will review the plan on an annual basis to account for changes in need and other developments in the area.