

**The Report of the WAVE Lobbying Questionnaire of July 2004**

**December 2005**

## **1. Introduction**

This document is a report of the responses to the lobbying questionnaire that was issued to all WAVE members in July 2004. The purpose of the questionnaire was to give all members the chance to comment on the issues that affected them. The questionnaire attempted to cover specific areas such as: compensation, support for the bereaved/injured and support from government/local politicians; whilst allowing members to comment on any other important issues.

A total of 338 questionnaires were completed and returned to WAVE. This constitutes a representative sample of our members in terms of numbers. However, we are aware that members face different issues depending on their individual circumstances and that not all of these will be represented in this report. Where possible, comments have been summarised under different themes where they have represented recurring issues.

It is envisaged that the responses will provide a basis for lobbying government. The timing of this report is opportune as it coincides with the appointment of the Interim Commissioner for Victims and Survivors of the Troubles. The terms of reference for the Interim Commissioner are to review current arrangements for service delivery and coordination of services for victims and survivors across departments and agencies, identifying gaps in service provision; to review how well the current funding arrangements in relation to services and grants paid to victims and survivors groups and individual victims and survivors are addressing need; and to consider the modalities of establishing the Victims and Survivors Forum envisaged in the Joint Declaration. It will be interesting to explore how need has been assessed by Government and whether a survey such as this will feed into such an assessment.

Further research such as this is required as there is a dearth of literature available that assesses the impact of the Troubles at an individual level. While this survey does not explore the circumstances of each member in detail it does aim to provide a basis for more detailed research.

The report is structured to closely follow that of the original questionnaire where the questions provide the titles for the findings. The report also includes some of the findings from the consultation undertaken by the Victims Unit on the development of the next phase of victims policy, this material is in italics. This material included from the consultation appeared to cover similar ground to the WAVE survey and it is useful to compare the findings of both government and victim/survivor led consultation exercises.

The comments from WAVE members have been included in the form in which they were provided as this report is first and foremost for WAVE members and it was important not to misinterpret them or summarise them any further. The comments were sorted and placed into the sections to which they appeared most relevant.

## **2. Findings**

### **2.1 Financial compensation for victims of the ‘Troubles’ has been adequate.**

2.1.1 15.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while 69.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 15.2% were unsure.

2.1.2 Victims should decide how money given to them is spent. Compensation for victims from early 70’s was basically nil compared to years later. We are forgotten about and they give 1000’s to ex prisoners. WAVE should highlight the amount of money going to terrorists and money going to victims.

2.1.3 *The compensation system should be speeded up and recent changes to the compensation arrangements should be made retrospective so that victims of earlier incidents should benefit.*

2.1.4 There is a general agreement in the accounts that earlier victims of the Troubles felt unfairly compensated. There is a general feeling that the system is unfair and it needs to work more quickly.

## **2.2 Support for people who have been bereaved through the Troubles has been adequate.**

2.2.1 28% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while 61.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

2.2.2 Not enough financial help or counselling for victims. More appropriately trained counsellors, support and social workers to deal with those affected. Continued aftercare needed, I felt so let down at the release of prisoners. Would have benefited from counselling at time but nothing was offered. WAVE needs more help to train people. Victims of early troubles have been failed by the system. Was a disgrace I had no one to talk to apart from my family. More counselling needed as it takes years to even adjust to normality. I would have benefited from counselling but nothing was offered. Things are getting worse and victims are not recognised or listened to. Staff at WAVE have been only means of support. We have had to move on without support from the powers that be. All victims have different needs and the 'one size fits all' policy does not work. Need for help for more distant family members such as grandparents. Recognition that victims have suffered and are still suffering in silence and alone. Victims don't want charity, just a means to survive. Lack of investigation into members of security forces murdered by terrorists.

2.2.3 *It was felt that a "one-stop shop" or some type of assistance to access services, statutory and voluntary, would be helpful. There should be*

*trauma centres in each HSS Board area and a mechanism for victims/victims' groups to communicate with the Interdepartmental Working Group on Victims. Need a long-term, joined-up strategy which takes account of current needs. Too many victims' organisations and higher levels of funding required for existing organisations.*

2.2.4 The comments reflect a need for a longer term view in terms of victims/survivors and for increased funding. There is also a need for counselling to be provided for those who have not been able to access it and for counsellors to be more appropriately trained to be more aware of the issues those bereaved by the Troubles may face.

**2.3 Support for people injured through the Troubles has been adequate.**

2.3.1 24.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while 56% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 19.6% were unsure.

2.3.2 More support needed for the injured. Counselling needed for the injured to be provided in their own homes. Continued support needed and not just one off projects. More specialist services needed such as education and training, therapies etc. Victims need more help and feel isolated. Need for longer term treatment. Need for follow up visits for the injured. Ongoing treatment of injuries should continue. More help for people in pain and without limbs.

2.3.3 *Statutory agencies need to have a sympathetic approach to victims' needs and training programmes should include an element to cover awareness of victims' issues. There is a need to insure that a victim with disabilities has accommodation appropriate to their needs. In relation to health and social services, there is a need for victims to be "fast-tracked" for help such as orthopaedic surgery and more help for carers; better awareness of victims' issues and collection of data on victims by social services and more specialist psychiatric services. GPs to be better educated as to the needs of victims and more use to be*

*made of community practice nurses and health visitors in meeting the needs of victims.*

2.3.4 The comments clearly show a need for greater support for the injured on a longer term basis. There is also a need to educate GPs and the wider health and social services sector as to the needs of the injured. There is also a need for services/support to be provided for the injured within their own homes.

**2.4 The government should set up a ‘Victims Champion’ (like the Police Ombudsman, or the Children’s Commissioner).**

2.4.1 82.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while 6.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 11.3% were unsure.

2.4.2 No comments provided from WAVE members.

2.4.3 *There was a divergence of views on the need for a Victims Commissioner. Some felt that he/she should be appointed on a dedicated long-term basis; should not be a civil servant and should come from grass roots level. There should be a central agency for victims. Others questioned the need for a Commissioner given that all the required structures are in place.*

2.4.4 The lack of comment from WAVE members may reflect general unfamiliarity with the concept/function of a proposed Victims’ Commissioner. Again, the comments reflect the need for a longer term vision for victim services and for a central body overseeing such services.

**2.5 The government should set up some kind of Truth Commission**

2.5.1 67% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while 19.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 13.7% were unsure.

2.5.2 Don't want Truth Commission set up as I would be angry if I found out who the murderers were. Truth Commission will never work as some elected officials cannot even admit that they were in terrorist organisations. Everyone needs to know who was responsible for the murder of their loved ones. Truth is unobtainable for 1000s due to a lack of government interest and police collusion. People need truth to get closure. Getting to the truth is more important than convictions. I need to find out the truth behind the event but not through a Truth Commission. People in power may have been involved and will block the truth. Persuade politicians and community leaders to admit their wrongs. There should be no amnesty for those who have murdered. Paramilitaries should apologise to their own communities. Truth does not exist in a society where ex-terrorists are involved in politics.

2.5.3 *A committee should be appointed to take forward the truth and reconciliation agenda and politicians should not be included on this committee. Without a complete end to terrorist activities it is premature to establish a committee type forum and that too much is still disputed to enable a satisfactory 'truth' to be accepted by all parties. Victims want to move on and such a Commission would not bring healing as different people take different roads in order to cope. The idea of an amnesty caused difficulty.*

2.5.4 A majority of members supported the idea of a truth recovery process. However, it is unclear as to the general awareness of what such a process may entail. There is a general wariness of involving politicians in this process as there appears to be little incentive for them to tell the truth. There are mixed feelings about a Truth Commission due to concerns about amnesties. There is a general feeling of a need for victims/survivors to access the truth for purposes of closure, however, there is lack of consensus as to whether a Truth Commission is the appropriate mechanism for achieving this.

**2.6 The legal/judicial systems should be used to pursue outstanding issues of justice. Are there issues such as cost, remote chance of convictions, or getting to the truth would influence your answer to this?**

2.6.1 86% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while 5.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

2.6.2 Truth and justice are important for reasons of closure. A majority of cases are unsolved and are no longer a priority. If we get a conviction then murderers are released long before sentence ends. Cost is the main issue. DPP should fight harder. Many victims need closure. Perpetrators should be convicted. Not enough police resources to do it. Need to get the truth. No point if people don't go to jail. No chance of conviction even though perpetrators known. Should be pursued no matter what the cost. Government never wanted convictions. Should pursue outstanding issues but know there is a remote chance of conviction. Truth is very important, creates trust, don't let things go. Truth unobtainable due to lack of govt and police interest. I want justice even though the murderers will serve no time. Should be prosecuted but will cost too much. Getting the truth would help healing process. Cost should not come into it. Sentence will be too short. Waste of time and money, who would ever listen. Justice only causes bitterness. Police weren't interested in catching criminals and didn't support me. Lack of information on outcomes from police and legal bodies. Need for continued investigation of outstanding issues. Need for access to investigation papers and photographs. Police should be given finance and manpower to pursue criminals. I had no contact with security forces since the inquest, not sure how to go about this. This generation will be dead before we get any answers. Investigations carried out by Police Ombudsman are conducted in secret and families cannot move on. The length of sentence should reflect what each person is being convicted of. We have to move on but how can we when there is no justice.

2.6.3 *Concern was expressed that people did not know how cases were investigated and how decisions not to reopen certain cases were made. Some felt that the PSNI needed more resources to pursue unsolved murder cases and that if the authorities tackled terrorism and racketeering more effectively this would bring solace to victims.*

2.6.4 The comments reflect a general concern that victims have not been properly informed as to the progress of any police investigations. The comments reflect a need for convictions in order to achieve closure even though under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement sentences will not be served. Both sets of comments highlighted the need for greater resources to be made available to the PSNI in order to investigate unsolved cases. The issue of justice is also linked to notions of truth and the need for this in order to achieve closure/healing.

## **2.7 The government has handled issues of concern to victims well**

2.7.1 4.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while 78.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 16.9% were unsure.

2.7.2 Victims overlooked in GFA. Families not kept informed of legal issues. Too much bureaucracy in applications for funding, feels like begging. Agencies to show more empathy and consideration for victims. Government bends over backwards to accommodate terrorists. Fed up with weak government policies and inaction. Left to cope on my own with no help apart from my own efforts to contact bodies and ask for it. We want to move on but how can we when there is so much injustice. Government have reneged on promises to both communities. Seen as nuisance by politicians, government will never give enough funds to help us. No help when required from any agency. No review of financial situation of victims. We the victims have had to move on without any

help from the powers that be. The services offered by WAVE are not recognised by Government.

2.7.3 *Statutory agencies need to have a sympathetic approach to victims' needs and training programmes should include an element to cover awareness of victims' issues. Need a long-term joined-up strategy which takes account of current needs and which provides for voluntary and statutory bodies to work together. Funding arrangements for victims groups are excessively bureaucratic and there is a need for the work of the groups to be strategically funded over many years. More information on services should be available to victims. The wives and members of the security forces feel that they have been forgotten. It was noted that the government has given recognition to some extent, but some felt that there should be some form of written acknowledgement of the price paid by those who were killed or injured as a result of the Troubles. Different groups such as ex-prisoners and bereaved families should not be competing for the same funding.*

2.7.4 The comments and survey results show a general dissatisfaction with the way government has treated victims' issues. There appears to be a need for a longer-term strategic vision to meet victims' issues and the need for a formal acknowledgement of what each victim has gone through. There is also a need to reduce the amount of red tape involved in funding applications and for individuals to be better informed of any services available to them. There is also a general feeling that perpetrators have been treated better than victims and that victims have been left isolated without the help they required.

## **2.8 Local politicians have handled issues of concern to victims well.**

2.8.1 5.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while 75.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 18.3% were unsure.

2.8.2 MPs have forgotten about those who voted for them. Political unwillingness to pursue outstanding issues. Political parties put party

first and forget about the people. Persuade politicians and community leaders to admit their wrongs. Lobby local politicians to support the bereaved, injured and traumatized. I have no faith in the police or local politicians. Politicians should engage in more cross community work and be more vocal in condemning violence that affects the other community.

2.8.3 *All participants in the conflict, including the British and Irish governments should admit their roles and responsibilities. People are misled by some local politicians who take a sectarian view.*

2.8.4 Both the comments and survey results highlight the impression that local politicians have not done enough to support victims and that a sectarian outlook has been perpetuated by them.

## **2.9 The work done by the Victims Liaison Unit (NIO) and the Victims Unit (OFMDFM) has been of value to victims.**

2.9.1 26.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while 39.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 33.7% of respondents were unsure.

2.9.2 No help when required from any agency. Small grants stopped and this has been difficult. Have not heard of these organisations. More funds and help needed from Memorial Fund. No support from NIO. Continued suffering is ignored by the NIO. I would not have known of the services offered by the NIMF if it were not for WAVE. The NIMF has been useful in providing financial assistance but this alone is not enough. Agencies should show more empathy and consideration for victims.

2.9.3 *Some aspects of the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund were praised, it had been helpful with home adaptations and is generally a good vehicle for small amounts of government funding for victims. However, there is a need to review criteria and to changes rules so that, for example, siblings of victims should be able to apply.*

2.9.4 The comments are generally supportive of the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund, however, there is a need for greater funding and for recognition by Government that other methods of assistance apart from small grants need to be provided. The services offered by NIMF also need to be better advertised. The comments from WAVE members in this section and in section 2.7 reflect the view that Government (NIO) overall has not provided enough support to victims/survivors. The proportion of members who responded as being 'unsure' in response to the question may reflect an unfamiliarity with the services offered by these bodies.

**2.10 There should be a memorial to all victims of the 'Troubles'.**

2.10.1 57% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while 27.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 15.6% were unsure.

2.10.2 Maybe a small memorial in each town where people were killed. Should be a focal point in central Belfast where people who lost loved ones can be recognised. Should have a memorial garden for those killed. Would like a service to remember all of those bereaved as a result of the Troubles. Memorials for innocent victims only.

*2.10.3 The idea of a separate memorial for civilian victims was proposed. Some were opposed to any memorial which included both innocent victims and perpetrators.*

2.10.4 Both sets of comments appear to support a memorial of some type but also highlight the difficulty regarding who should be included in any such memorial. The proportion of people disagreeing with the statement may be a reflection of this difficulty.

## **2.11 Further Comments**

2.11.1 This section is a summary of the comments provided in response to the questions: Are there any other issues of concern to you; if we could focus on only a small number of issues in addition to compensation, what would these be; and the final comments section. As these questions didn't seek specific answers it was necessary to sort the responses into different themes. Again, there is a need to emphasise that not all of the responses could be included and the report does not attempt to provide an exhaustive list.

### **2.11.2 A Long Term Vision Required**

Follow up visits from professionals for the injured. Family circumstances afterwards should be investigated. Concerned about how my children will be affected in the long term. Need to focus on transgenerational trauma. Should be more contact with victims on a long-term basis. To keep in touch with victims to see how they are doing. Continual personal development for victims so that they can rebuild their lives. Longer term counselling. Survey needed to investigate recurring effects murders have on families. No one knows the pain victims feel many years on, you are left on your own, life will never be the same again. Where is the follow up after WAVE, need for a support network. Victims groups should have a forward plan/vision, victims can't stay victims forever. There is a lack of a strategic plan to meet the needs of victims, this should be victim led. More concern for our children as facing the future without a parent has a traumatic effect in many ways. WAVE is my only point of contact and there is a need for continued support.

### **2.11.3 Rural Issues/Isolation**

Lack of transport for WAVE services in rural areas. More home visits. Reach out to the housebound and the elderly. Need for counselling within the home. People in rural areas have been forgotten about. I

suffer from panic attacks and am afraid to go out, would like help to get out of the house.

#### 2.11.4 Need for better advertising of services

Need for more publicity on work carried out by WAVE. GPs should offer information about services on offer to victims. Ensure victims are aware of and receive social security benefits. Not enough information available on victim services.

#### 2.11.5 Need for Support Network

Families affected should be able to get to know other families. Need for emotional support and someone to talk to. Have been helped a lot by WAVE, staff there have lost loved ones and know how I feel. Great that WAVE exists but there should be more support networks and funding made available to help everyone. Victims groups should be encouraged to work collectively. Victims groups should develop an association and work together on a lobbying campaign and take control of the sector.

#### 2.11.6 Comments on WAVE

Support of WAVE has been invaluable. Staff at WAVE have been highly professional, caring and supportive. WAVE has been a brilliant help but appear to be understaffed. Some people in WAVE are better informed of services offered than others. WAVE should highlight money going to ex prisoners and money going to victims' groups. More funding required for WAVE. More advertising of services offered by WAVE and for encouragement for all members to get involved on a voluntary basis. Members who cannot attend groups are not aware of services. Leaflets sent by WAVE are always too late and the events are over. Should have more discussions and joining of men's and women's groups. Services offered by WAVE are not recognised by government. WAVE has been very helpful and there should be more groups like it.

### 2.11.7 Other Comments

Individuals should be given a chance to tell their story. Employers need legislation/education to help victims. Finger of suspicion pointed at innocent people. Need to make public aware of victims issues. More thought given to siblings of those killed. Need for more training and education courses. Victims don't want charity just a means to survive. More support needed for those who have difficulty getting motivated into living life.

## **3. Conclusions**

From the comments received, this survey appears to have offered the first opportunity for some members to comment on how they have been affected by the Troubles and what their needs are. As each questionnaire was relatively brief there has only been a limited opportunity for members to speak about the issues they face in any amount of detail. The survey results indicate the need for further research into the issues faced by victims/survivors and for long term support to be provided. The main issues that arose are as follows:

1. Compensation needs to be reviewed in order to assess whether the needs of the injured are being met and if victims/survivors affected during the early stages of the Troubles were treated unfairly.
2. There is a need for counselling to be provided for those who did not receive it and this is particularly relevant for those affected in the early stages of the Troubles. There is a need to ensure that counselling is provided on a longer-term basis if required and for counsellors to be appropriately trained.
3. There is a need to tackle the sense of isolation felt by victims/survivors. Such isolation can be a result of: living in a rural area; the injured and elderly being unable to leave their homes;

and due to those who are unaware of the services offered for victims/survivors.

4. Services for victims/survivors need to be better advertised and for GPs and the wider health and social services sector to refer patients to organisations such as WAVE.
5. There is a need for greater awareness of victim/survivor issues among GPs, the health and social services sectors, education providers and employers.
6. There is a need for truth and justice to be achieved and the need for a suitable mechanism for achieving truth to be established as there is a lack of trust in the current proposals for a Truth Commission model. Justice has not been sought in the past due to: the prohibitive costs involved; the lack of information regarding the progress of murder investigations; and the lack of support overall offered to victims/survivors offered by the police and government.
7. Overall, there has been a general lack of support for victims/survivors from government and statutory agencies. There is a need for a longer term, joined-up victims strategy that seeks to tackle issues such as:
  - compensation;
  - specialised and appropriate counselling services;
  - improved referral arrangements and advertisement of services;
  - education and awareness of victim/survivor issues;
  - truth and justice;
  - isolation;
  - formal and informal support networks.