

→ file d. 35/2001

# The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

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Community Relations, Human Rights and Victims Division  
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6<sup>th</sup> November 2001

Dear Colleague

## BASELINE STUDY ON SERVICE PROVISION FOR VICTIMS

Earlier this year you participated in a piece of research, conducted by Deloitte and Touche on behalf of this Department, to determine the current level of service provision for victims and help identify what gaps exist. I attach a summary report of the findings and recommendations and a list of action points showing how we propose to take those recommendations forward.

Unfortunately, the findings and recommendations of this research were not available to us when we issued our Consultation Paper on a Victims Strategy in August this year but I can assure you that the results of the research will inform the eventual strategy. I would also point out that it will be difficult to implement some of the action points until all the responses to the consultation have been evaluated and the Victims Strategy finalised.

Thank you for your participation in this vital research. The summary report and the action points arising from it will be placed on the Victims Unit website [www.victimsni.gov.uk](http://www.victimsni.gov.uk) or further copies can be obtained by contacting the Victims Unit on 028 9052 2558 or email [info@victimsni.gov.uk](mailto:info@victimsni.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely

*Fergus Devitt*

Fergus Devitt  
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## **ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES TO VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF THE TROUBLES**

### **ACTION POINTS**

#### **Suggested Improvement**

- Improved communication between statutory agencies

#### **Action**

- An Interdepartmental Working Group (IDWG) on Victims has been established, on which each Government Department, The Social Security Agency and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are represented. One of its aims is to develop a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of services;
- A series of capacity building seminars for policy makers and funders, aimed at improving communication and developing collaborative working practices, has been completed. Further capacity building will be examined in light of responses to the consultation process.

#### **Suggested Improvement**

- Invite groups to participate on local and regional networks;
- Forums to provide victims' groups with an input into policy making;
- More representation of victims into policy making
- Regular informal forums or meetings with government

#### **Action**

- The Interdepartmental Working Group on Victims is aware that it needs to improve its interaction with victims and their representatives. Questions 1 and 11 in the Consultation Paper on a Victims Strategy ask for views on how victims and victims' groups can input into policy initiatives. When the consultation period has ended all the responses will be considered and discussions will be held on how best collaborative working between the statutory, voluntary/community and victims sectors can be taken forward;
- The draft action plan in the consultation paper proposes that, beginning in the 2002-03 financial year, all Departments and Agencies will ensure that, where appropriate, victims' needs are reflected in their corporate planning documentation;
- The draft action plan in the consultation paper proposes that by March 2002 all public consultation will include, where appropriate, victims' groups and individuals;
- The draft action plan in the consultation paper proposes that by June 2002 the Department of Education will investigate how services such as the Education Welfare Service and Behaviour Support Teams can interact with victims and victims' groups.

#### **Suggested Improvement**

- Improved policy networks with government and statutory agencies

#### **Action**

- The IDWG and the Victims Unit intend that the guidelines laid down in the 'Compact Between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector' will be followed. Question 7 in the Consultation Paper on a Victims Strategy asks how best the statutory and voluntary/community sectors can work in partnership. When the consultation is complete proposals on how collaborative working can be taken forward will be discussed.

#### **Suggested Improvement**

- Full register of services provided to groups
- Advertising of services

#### **Action**

- The Victims Unit will develop a service delivery model showing service providers and full explanations of their roles and responsibilities by February 2002.
- The Victims Unit will work with Departments to determine how best to inform victims of the range of services available and relevant contact points.
- The Victims Unit will work with other organizations such as the Trauma Advisory Panels and Local Strategy Partnerships to make information available on a local/regional basis.

#### **Suggested Improvement**

- Train statutory services in how to deal with victims

#### **Action**

- The training of Civil Service and Personal Social services staff is addressed in the draft action plan of the consultation paper. Responses to the consultation will determine how this will be taken forward.

#### **Suggested Improvement**

- Fund training in specialist areas e.g. trauma counselling

#### **Action**

- A review of counselling is currently being undertaken by the Social Services Inspectorate and will inform developments in this area;
- Activities such as training for counsellors and trainers may be eligible for funding under the 'Integration and Reconciliation of Victims' Measure of the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation.

#### **Suggested Improvements**

- Victims groups need to be made aware of the operation of Trauma Advisory Panels (TAPs)
- A referral mechanism should be established for groups to refer emergency cases to health professionals including a report back facility to groups

- A referral policy recognising the work of, and providing additional funding for, groups who provide a counselling service

#### **Action**

- These suggested improvements will be passed to the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety and will be considered along with any other points, relevant to that Department, received in response to the Consultation Paper on a Victims Strategy
- The Victims Unit will meet regularly with the TAPs to discuss a range of issues, including how to publicise their work.

#### **Funding**

A wide range of funding issues was raised by the research and the Victims Unit is aware that this is a key area for victims work and individuals. It is difficult, at this stage, to give any definitive response to the points raised as:

- (a) some areas of funding have not yet been finalized; and
- (b) the consultation paper asks a specific question about funding.

The Victims' Strategy will obviously refer specifically to funding and the findings of the research will be used to inform any developments in that area.