

## RESPONSE TO OFMDFM OUTLINE DRAFT STRATEGIC APPROACH FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS – CONSULTATION PAPER

### Introduction

CVSNI exists to make a positive difference in the lives of victims and survivors; we will, therefore, support any initiative which helps deliver that aim.

The concept of a 10 year strategy deserves such support. For too long, individuals and groups have endured avoidable uncertainty because of the short-term nature of government policy, and funding.

That said, the Outline draft strategic approach for Victims and Survivors is just that – a strategic document, addressing an analysis of what needs to be done and how to do it. In offering our response, we are mindful that a strategy is only as good as its implementation plan, and we look forward to working closely with the Department, and in liaison with victims and survivors, in order to optimise delivery.

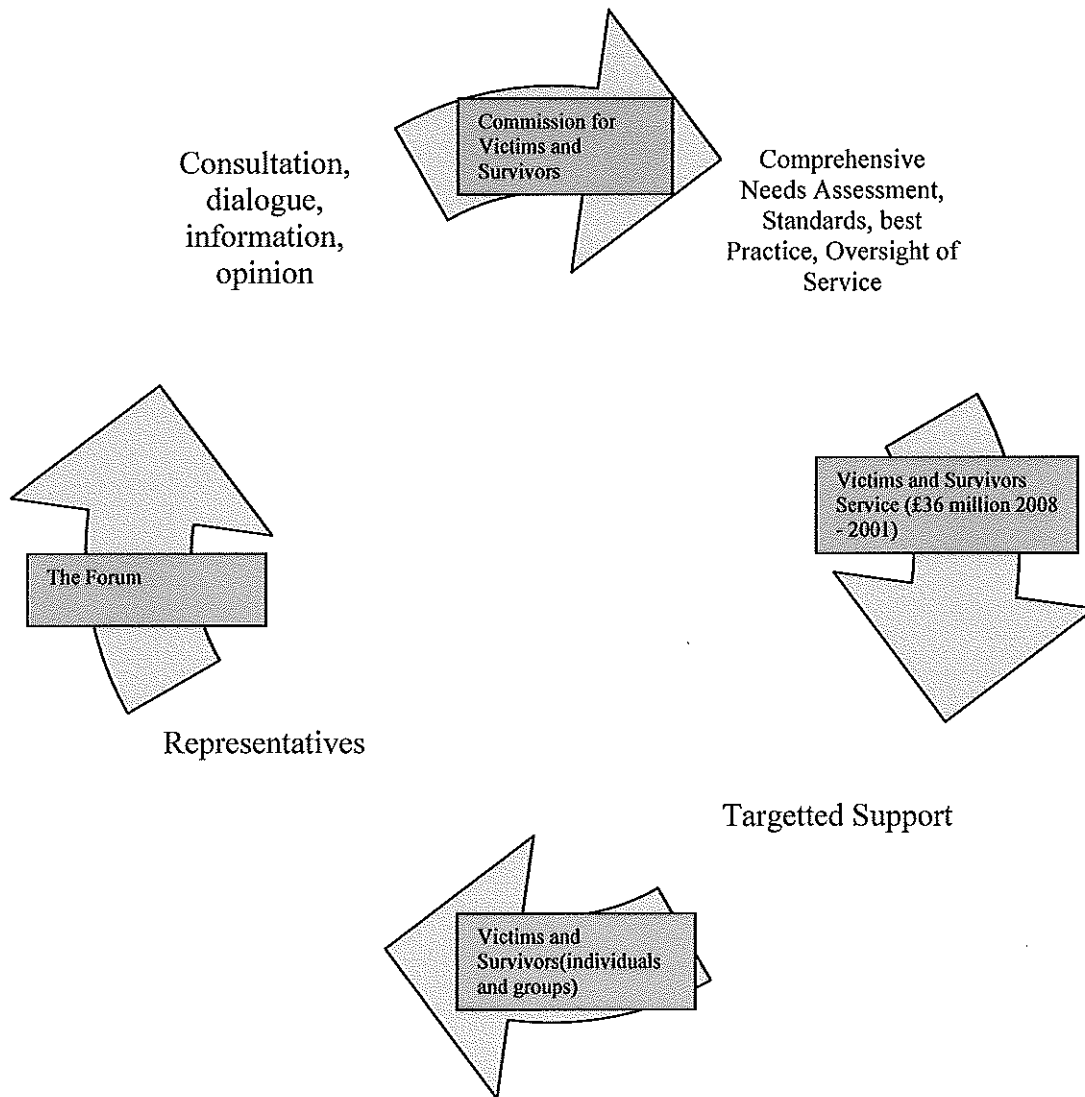
CVSNI has studied the proposed structure for delivery, and will support it if the relationships between the key elements are right.

The key elements are:

- The Commission for Victims & Survivors;
- The Forum for Victims & Survivors;
- The Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA);
- The proposed new Service for Victims and Survivors.

Our view of an effective set of relationships is that:

- The proposed new Service will have responsibility for allocating the budget, currently £36 million over the three years 2008-2011, to individual victims and survivors, and to groups;
- Decisions about how the funding is allocated will be based upon the Comprehensive Needs Assessment;
- CVSNI will be responsible for compiling the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, and drawing conclusions and recommendations from it;
- CVSNI will consult, and work in partnership with the Forum to compile and analyse the CNA, and to draw up recommendations for how the Service should allocate the £36m.
- CVSNI will have oversight of the Victim and Survivor Service, which takes direction from government, based on policy.



However, the relationship should be about more than delivering the funding; the strategy must be, and is, inclusive of the need for engagement with individuals, on a group-to-group basis, and a group-to-government level; it must also address the need to promote best practice and the adoption of standards of service delivery.

### **The Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA)**

The commissioning of a CNA is long overdue; without it, there can be no certainty that support and services match need; no certainty of the numbers to attach to any specific service; no certainty that the delivery of support and services represents Value For Money.

The CNA is the responsibility of the Commission. We believe it is the foundation of a successful strategy.

We are committed to working with the Forum in compiling, quality assuring and continually updating the CNA to reflect the changing needs of victims and survivors.

The Commission believes there is a tension between the timescale required to establish the Forum, and the urgent need to begin the process of aligning the delivery of support and services more closely to a comprehensive evidence base of needs. To resolve this tension, the Commission has begun a process designed to deliver an initial review of needs, which may be used to inform service delivery ahead of agreeing the CNA with the Forum.

Paragraph 33 of the Outline draft strategic approach for Victims and Survivors states, "Victims and Survivors groups will be provided with financial assistance to assist them in contributing to the comprehensive needs assessment process". **The Commission seeks clarity on what the Department proposes in this regard.**

We are clear that the CNA research should be independent and objective of all interested parties, not least of the Commission.

We believe that the CNA should be a comprehensive document which identifies all the needs of victims and survivors. We advocate, therefore, that the focus of the CNA is broad and includes assessment of needs in the following areas:

#### Individual

- Counselling
- Befriending
- Therapies
- Information
- Truth Recovery (personal)
- Financial
- Social Isolation
- Exclusion
- Recognition (storytelling)
- Public Acknowledgement
- Employment
- Education/training
- Benefits
- Health
- Mental Health and well-being

#### Community

- Building for the future
- Dealing with the past
- Legislation
- Education – broader community
- Business Links
- Community Health

- Mental health and well-being

### **The Commission for Victims and Survivors**

The Outline draft strategic approach for Victims and Survivors reproduces the Commission's six statutory duties. The Commission has based its Initial Work Programme on these duties.

The Outline draft strategic approach for Victims and Survivors also references a number of CVSNI's powers, including research and guidance on best practice. The Commission has already agreed a number of areas where research is a pressing need.

The Commission is also committed to working in collaboration to identify best practice standards across a range of relevant services, and drawing up good practice guidelines.

### **The Forum**

Establishing the Forum is a statutory requirement placed upon this Commission. We have already affirmed our commitment to not only making it happen, but to making it as relevant, impactful and influential as possible.

We believe the Forum should:

- Provide a safe and respectful space for consultation and discussion
- Provide a safe and respectful space for meeting and reflecting
- Be representative of victims and survivors, as defined in The Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006
- Assist the Commission to develop the Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- View the CNA as an evolving process, with a continuous capacity to respond to changing needs
- Promote collaborative working and ensure that victims and survivors and services provided on their behalf are not isolated but are increasingly integrated with general services

The Outline draft strategic approach for Victims and Survivors states at Paragraph 20 that the Forum must "include representation from statutory, voluntary and community organisations involved in work with victims and survivors." **Whilst it is likely that those groups will be involved in the Forum, we would be clear that this pre-supposes the outcome of debates yet to take place amongst key stakeholders in a process that the Commission has a statutory duty to implement.**

### **The Victims and Survivors Service**

The Commission believe the functions of the proposed Service should be:

- To establish and deliver **new** funding arrangements for groups and individuals
- To ensure that funding is delivered based on the needs defined and prioritised by CVSNI in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- To commission services delivered to standards based on Best Practice advice published by CVSNI
- To assist individuals and provide referral services, delivered to standards based on Best Practice advice published by CVSNI
- To undertake monitoring and evaluation, ensuring organisations in the community/voluntary and statutory sector provide services to quality standards, in a timely manner, with appropriate outcomes
- To establish outcome measurements for service providers based on Best Practice guidelines published by CVSNI

We believe that the Service must have the following qualities:

- Adequate resources to meet demand
- The highest financial, ethical and service delivery standards
- The capability to understand the complex, sensitive and at times conflicting needs and aspirations of victims and survivors and those who deliver services to them
- A **“can-do” attitude** that is capable of being both proactive and reactive
- A broad vision that ensures duplication is minimised, service provision streamlined where possible and a cross-sectoral approach is promoted

The consultation states that proposals for a victim and survivor service would be published in August 2008. That deadline has passed without any information about the Department’s thinking being made available to stakeholders and from our consultations, we are aware that this is causing concern in the sector. CVSNI regards this as not only regrettable but indicative of a **systemic problem** with the timelines published in the Outline draft strategic approach for Victims and Survivors. (We offer further thoughts at “Conclusion” below).

The Commission raises the following questions on the operation of the Victims and Survivors Service:

- The operating structure of the Service
- How it will be resourced (personnel)
- Whether services/functions will be contracted-out and how that process will be implemented
- Whether Service personnel/contracted providers be sufficiently insightful to allow them to address the needs of victims and survivors and what standards will be put in place to ensure that standards of service and care are at the highest level
- What “practical support” as mentioned in paragraph 16 of the consultation the Department envisages the Service will provide

- **The working relationship between the Service and the Department**

The Department must clarify how it envisages the Service will operate on the ground. The Commission believes that the Service should:

- Operate as a cohesive entity where the various strands of service provision are co-ordinated
- Be accessible via as many means as possible, including telephone, post, internet and email
- Have local contact points for enquiries, consultations and referrals

The Commission also believes the Department should use the opportunity of the Reform of Public Administration (RPA), to research the capacity of local councils and/or the new libraries regime to deliver this localised service.

### **A 10 Year Strategy – Where We Agree**

CVSNI welcomes the recognition of the requirement for a longer-term view of the enduring needs of victims and survivors, **the people who have suffered, and continue to suffer most as a result of our conflict.**

We believe a strategy will only be truly effective if it addresses the negative impacts of the current short-term approach, e.g. ending the dependence of groups on the annual awarding of grants without which they cannot exist, or removing the disincentives to sharing best practice.

The Strategy should address the three key areas of:

- Serving present need
- Dealing with the past
- Building for the future

No individual victim or survivor should feel obliged to become engaged in any of those three key areas, but rather empowered to contribute to one, two, or all three as is appropriate to their wishes.

A strategy must put individual victims and survivors at its core, recognising that their needs can vary greatly, and that over time can also change in type and degree. Victims and survivors must be treated with dignity, and those representing the statutory services must be encouraged, **and trained where necessary, to ensure their approach / attitude** is appropriately knowledge-based, sympathetic and victim-centred.

There is a need to implement the strategy in a manner which brings to an end unnecessary competition and duplication.

### **Our Questions on the Ten Year Strategy**

- Single Identity Groupings:
  - (i) How does the Outline draft strategic approach for Victims and Survivors position on respecting those who may wish to remain in a single identity grouping complement broader government policy on the future?
  - (ii) Does the Department have a view on Single Identity working beyond the 10 year term of the strategy?
    - What does the Department mean by the use of the term “reparations”?
    - Does the Department make any differentiation between individual and community need to deal with the past as an essential element of transition?
    - In stating the objective of seeing services mainstreamed, does the Department see the 10 year period as achieving a significant movement towards that goal, or its completion?

### **Conclusion**

The timeline outlined in the consultation cannot be achieved in our opinion. No information on the operation of the proposed Service is available to examine its envisaged role and remit in conjunction with the Commission and Forum and this needs to be addressed urgently.

The establishment of the Forum by the Commission has been outlined in our draft initial work programme, but we must be mindful as the consultation is, of allowing victims and survivors to move at their own pace in respect of this and to ensure we create common ground on the make-up, role and remit of the Forum.

The CNA which informs the strategic direction of the proposed Service will not be completed by March 2009. CVS has commissioned an Initial Review of Needs which will be completed by December 2008. The transition from current funding and support arrangements to new arrangements needs to be carefully managed to ensure that service provision is neither lost nor negatively impacted. The Department needs to address urgently how funding to individuals and groups will continue post March 2009 when current interim arrangements come to an end, and the input of the Initial Review of Needs into that arrangement.

The consultation on a Strategic Approach for Victims and Survivors is designed to develop a 10-year strategy. Currently, government has committed funding in this area for a three year period. The Department needs to take cognisance of how it intends to resource years 4-10 of the strategy.