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No 25/297

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FROM: WILLIAM STEVENSON  
Victims Liaison Unit  
11 August 1998

Mr Black 108/8

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**BLOOMFIELD - BRIEFING NOTE FOR THE VISIT TO SURVIVORS OF TRAUMA AND THE PRESS CONFERENCE PLANNED FOR WEDNESDAY 12 AUGUST 1998**

Summary

**Issue:** The Minister has agreed to meet members of the Survivors of Trauma group followed by a press conference to launch a further set of victims initiatives. This submission contains:

- briefing for the visit to Survivors of Trauma;
- a speech to be delivered by the Minister at the opening of the Press Conference; and
- Q&As for the press conference.

**Timing:** Urgent. To be seen by the Minister before tomorrow's event which begins at 2.00 pm.

**Recommendation:** The Minister notes the attached briefing.

Background

As part of the Minister's programme of meetings with victims and their support groups, a meeting has been arranged with Survivors of Trauma (SOT) on Wednesday 12 August 1998. The committee of SOT has agreed to host the press

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conference at which the Minister will announce a further set of initiatives for victims. The timetable for this event will be:

- 2.00 pm - Minister meets privately with members of SOT
- 3.00 pm - Minister makes a statement to the press, answers questions from the press and gives some one-to-one TV and radio interviews.

Survivors of Trauma

Survivors of Trauma is a community group set up in 1995 by relatives of people killed as a result of the Troubles in the North Belfast area (the notorious BT14). They work with local people to support them in working through their trauma and moving on (to become survivors of trauma).

The group works on a community basis and is keen to promote and develop community based responses to the effects of the Troubles.

While the group originated in the nationalist Ardoyne area it has expanded to become more cross-community in recent times.

The HQ of the group is in a Church of Ireland church (St Silas's) which was disused following demographic changes. The purchase of this property was funded mainly through peace and reconciliation grants - they have also been awarded over £300K to refurbish the building.

Response to Bloomfield

SOT has provided a detailed response to the Bloomfield report. The main themes are:

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- welcome for the recognition of victims in the Bloomfield Report, the SSI report and the Agreement;
- urge solutions and funding to be community based;
- want VLU to prioritise the needs of communities which have been most affected by deaths and social and economic disadvantage;
- agree that TSN should be used to direct funds at victims groups;
- support the work of NIVT, Cost of the Troubles and the Social Services Inspectorate. Would like the VLU to use this expertise;
- a commitment from Government to secure future funding for groups such as SOT;
- memorial/memorial day not favoured.

Format of the private meeting

- (1) 2.00 pm - SOT have arranged that the Minister will be welcomed by Brendan Bradley, the Chairman of the group. The Minister has met Brendan several times - he is a victim himself, having lost several [3?] members of his family in the Troubles.
- (2) Brendan Bradley will give a brief overview of the work of SOT.
- (3) The Minister will meet with 10-12 members of SOT for a general discussion and Q&A session.

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- (4) 3.00 pm - the Minister will leave the private meeting and move into the adjacent large room for the press conference.

Format of the Press Conference

- 3.00 pm - The Minister will make a statement to the press - a draft speech is attached at Annex A.
- 3.10 pm - The Minister will answer questions from the press and give one-to-one interviews with TV and radio. Q&As are attached at Annex B.
- 4.00 pm - The Minister will leave.

A copy of the Press Release is at Annex C.

Other Attendees

We have invited a representative of the four organisations which have been awarded grants (WAVE, Shankill Stress Centre, Disability Action and FAIT, plus Survivors of Trauma) as the press may want to interview them also.

I will attend the event and would be happy to provide any support required by the Minister.

*William Stevenson*

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**DRAFT SPEECH**

I am pleased to be able to announce today a further set of initiatives to support victims and survivors of the troubles following on from the recommendations in Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's report "We Will Remember Them". As Minister with responsibility for victims, I and my officials have been engaged in a comprehensive consultation exercise with victims groups. Indeed, I have just met with members of the Survivors of Trauma group and I am grateful to them for sharing their often harrowing experiences with me and, for agreeing to host this press event today.

My meetings to date have confirmed my view that the victim community has been greatly neglected over the past 30 years. I am committed to ensuring that we do not forget the sacrifices made by very many people and, to providing help to victims and their loved ones. I will do all I can to deliver improved support services and to ensure that victims get the recognition that they deserve. I know that the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State fully support this view.

Although we are still consulting on the Bloomfield Report until 30 September, I am entirely persuaded that we should move on four specific areas which I believe will have the support of victims and their support groups. The four initiatives which I am announcing today are:-

- (1) the creation of an **Educational Bursary Scheme** for children and young adults who have lost a parent in the Troubles or have become victims in some other way;
- (2) the creation of a **Memorial Fund** which will address the financial hardship and distress of victims;

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- (3) an **Independent Review of the Fitness for Purpose of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme** as it affects victims of the Troubles;
- (4) I also want to provide **funding for some pilot projects** which will address problems with particular groups of victims.

I will deal with each of these initiatives separately.

**THE EDUCATIONAL BURSARY SCHEME**

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield recommended the creation of a fund to assist in particular children and young people affected by the death of a parent. Others such as the Cost of the Troubles Study and Barnardos agree that the children who are victims have particular needs, including educational needs. I have already met with a group of individuals from the voluntary/private/education and business sectors with a view to taking this matter forward and today I can announce that Mrs Lynda Wilson - Director of Children's Services, Barnardos - has agreed to lead a group which will advise me on how best I can move quickly to establish the bursary scheme.

The Government will commit £250k to the Educational Bursary Scheme.

**A MEMORIAL FUND**

It is the case that there are some victims who suffer financial hardship. I therefore propose to move quickly on Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's recommendation that a Memorial Fund should be established. I am delighted that George Bain - Vice Chancellor of the Queen's University, Belfast - has agreed to become Chairman of the Memorial Fund and he will begin work soon to establish the Fund. The fund will seek contributions from the private sector locally and overseas. While it will

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initially deal with hardship I expect that it will eventually include the Educational Trust and other support measures.

**REVIEW OF COMPENSATION**

One of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's key recommendations was that there should be a comprehensive review of the "fitness for purpose" of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme in serving the needs of victims of violence. The Government has accepted this recommendation, and I am pleased to be able to announce today that Sir Kenneth himself has agreed to lead this review. The names of those who will assist him will be announced shortly, and I hope that the exercise can begin next month. The reviewers will be asked to report by March next year. The review will also be asked to address how any shortcomings in the present arrangements might be rectified for the future in any new statutory framework providing for a system of criminal injuries compensation in Northern Ireland. They will take into account lessons from other jurisdictions, together with the need for fairness, equity, openness and affordability. I look forward to receiving the review's funding early next year.

**FUNDING OF PILOT PROJECTS**

Much work is already undertaken by the voluntary and community sectors to support victims and their families and we have a lot to thank them for.

However, more work needs to be done and that means increased resources. Today I am announcing four pilot projects which will address some of the needs of young adolescents, the elderly/housebound and the disabled.

Survivors of Trauma has been allocated £5,000 to run a pilot scheme to address the specific needs of victims who are elderly and/or housebound.

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Shankill Stress Centre has been awarded £5,000 to extend their pilot scheme which provides an education and awareness programme for adolescent victims.

Disability Action has been awarded £6,170 to part-fund the delivery of a programme which addresses the particular needs of those who have been disabled by the Troubles.

I am keenly aware of the current demand for basic befriending and support for victims across the Province. I have therefore awarded £30,000 to WAVE to expand its existing regional outreach service and £10,000 to Families of Intimidation and Terror to initiate a befriending service.

These measures in total represent additional funding of around £60,000.

I believe that this package of four initiatives which I have launched today will provide much needed support to victims in areas where it is most needed. This announcement is evidence of continued commitment by this Government to recognise and support the many who have suffered during the past 30 years.

I am not however complacent - we have much more work to do and further announcements will be made in the Autumn once the consultation period is complete.

Thank you, any questions?

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**Q & As**

**General**

**Why is this announcement being made today?**

Strictly speaking we should wait until the consultation exercise on the Bloomfield Report is completed on 30 September 1998. However, my discussions with victims groups persuade me that there is a need to move rapidly on certain topics which include the special education needs of children, financial hardship, and a review of the compensation scheme as it affects victims.

**Is today's announcement a sop to counter the criticisms over the early release of prisoners?**

Definitely not. The Bloomfield Report was commenced in October 1997 - long before the early release of prisoners was agreed.

**Victims V Prisoners**

**Is the victims issue seen as a counterbalance to the prisoner release scheme in the Agreement?**

Victims are highlighted separately in the Agreement and their needs will be addressed in their own right and not as a counterbalance to our plans for prisoners.

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**Do you understand the opposition of many victims to the prisoner issue?**

Yes, and I have heard these views first hand from many victims. I understand that it is a very difficult and sensitive issue but I believe that it is a key element of the Agreement.

**The Educational Bursary Scheme**

**Why highlight the educational needs of victims?**

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield and others identified the special needs of children whose education has been affected by trauma suffered because of the Troubles. If we do not address this problem we will have a generation of young victims with poor education and therefore poor prospects for the future. We want to break this cycle.

**How much will be spent on the Bursary Scheme?**

The Government will commit £250k.

**Who will administer the scheme?**

The scheme will be administered by a body independent of Government.

Lynda Wilson, Director of Children's Services, Barnardos is taking the work forward to establish this body.

**When will the scheme begin to function?**

Work will begin immediately to set up the scheme. I hope that we will be in a position to grant bursaries from early next year.

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**What will the fund cover?**

I want the fund to be as inclusive as possible and to provide innovative options across all levels of academic and vocational study.

**The Memorial Fund**

**Why are you launching a Memorial Fund?**

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield recommended that a Memorial Fund should be established. My consultations to date concur with this view and I am moving quickly to have the fund established to deal initially with cases of hardship among victims.

**Who will manage the fund?**

I am delighted that George Bain, Vice Chancellor of the Queen's University, Belfast has agreed to become Chairman of the Memorial Fund. I will be working with George to establish an independent panel of Trustees who will manage the fund.

**When will the fund be up and running?**

It will take some time to put all the necessary arrangements in place including seeking contributions from overseas. We will be moving ahead as quickly as possible as I recognise that there is a need to address financial hardship amongst some individual victims.

**Why are you seeking contributions from overseas and locally?**

There is widespread interest in the problems experienced by victims and I want to harness any sources of financial support in addition to that which the Government

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has committed. By seeking public support we can maximise the funds available to victims and give tangible expression to the wishes of others to help.

**Who will the fund help?**

Initially I want the fund to address financial hardship. Eventually I see it incorporating the Educational Trust and other Bloomfield recommendations such as the funding of victim support services/groups and memorials.

**Review of compensation**

**Who will assist Bloomfield?**

I can't say yet. But we envisage an academic lawyer and someone from a social services background.

**Are there any plans to introduce a tariff scheme?**

The introduction of a tariff scheme for criminal injuries compensation is on the Government's agenda. It is, after all, the way in which the subject is handled in the rest of the UK and it would address some of the shortcomings identified in Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's report. But the issue will not be addressed further until after the review has reported.

**What about compensation for people who have suffered in the past?**

Under current legislation it is impossible to re-open claims already settled or to entertain new claims beyond the three-year limit. It is my intention that the new Memorial fund will address individual cases of hardship.

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**Funding to Groups**

**Why are you funding these particular groups?**

I am providing small amounts of funding to groups which have put forward credible proposals to look at particular types of support for victims on a **pilot scheme basis**. I am also funding the extension of the befriending service offered by WAVE because I know that there is a particular need in this area.

**What about the £200K promised earlier?**

The Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust (NIVT) has agreed to administer the allocation of this money to the community and voluntary sector. They have decided to work with the groups to draw up the criteria and I understand that they plan to launch the scheme next month.

**Will additional funds be made available to the voluntary and community sector?**

Further funding will be informed by the outcome of the consultation exercise.

**How much money has been allocated from the £5m?**

The initiatives announced today brings the total allocated to date to around £2.2m.

The breakdown is:

Trauma Centre	£700k
Grants to be allocated by NIVT	£200k
Educational Bursary Scheme	£250k
Memorial Fund	£1.0m
Grants to fund pilot schemes	<u>£60k</u>
	£2.21m

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**NEW SUPPORT ANNOUNCED FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE**

The Minister for Victims, Mr Adam Ingram MP, today announced new measures to support the needs of victims of the Troubles, which were identified in Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's report 'We Will Remember Them'.

Speaking at the Survivors of Trauma Centre, 151 Cliftonville Road, Belfast, Mr Ingram said that this marked a further significant stage in the process of dealing with the very real problems faced by many of the victims of violence.

The announcement includes :-

- The establishment of an Educational Bursary Scheme to provide educational assistance to children and young adults who have lost a parent in the Troubles or who have become a victim in some other way. The Government will commit £250K to the scheme. The work is to be taken forward by Mrs Lynda Wilson, Director of Children's Services, Barnardos.
- The establishment of a Memorial Fund to provide support to victims who suffer financial hardship. The Government will seek contributions to the fund from overseas, and locally and will provide matching funding of up to £1m. Mr George Bain, Vice Chancellor of the Queen's University, Belfast, will chair the Memorial Fund.
- The provision of £60,000 to fund pilot schemes for victims which will help the young, the elderly/house-bound, the disabled and provide additional befriending and support services.

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- An independent Review of the "Fitness for Purpose" of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme as it affects victims of the Troubles. The review is to be led by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield.

Mr Ingram said:

**"I believe that these initiatives will provide much needed support to victims where it is most needed. It is a comprehensive package which targets some major areas of disadvantage for victims and their families.**

**"It addresses the educational needs of young people who have lost a parent or are themselves victims as a result of the Troubles, and will assist those facing financial difficulties. As well, the funding for pilot schemes will help to ensure that new innovative, proposals are tailored specifically to meet the needs of local communities.**

**"The announcement should be seen as continued commitment by Government to recognise and support those who have suffered during the past 30 years. We have much more to do and further announcements will be made in the Autumn, once the consultation process is complete."**

In conclusion, Mr Ingram said that he looked forward to receiving early next year, the review by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield into 'Fitness for Purpose' of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme.

**Notes to Editors**

The grants to the community and voluntary sector have been allocated to:-

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Survivors of Trauma	£5,000 (for the elderly/housebound victims)
Shankill Stress Centre	£5,000 (for adolescent victims)
Disability Action	£6,170 (for disabled victims)
FAIT	£10,000 (to establishing a befriending service)
WAVE	£30,000 (to extend their outreach service)

Further information may be obtained from:

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