

Summary of the Responses (Received by 2.45 pm, 15 June 1999)

Northern Ireland Office

What has already been done

- Establishment of the Victims Liaison Unit.
- Undertook widespread consultation exercise on the Bloomfield Report (summary attached at Annex B).
- Establishment of the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund (£1m).
- Funded the establishment of a new Family Trauma Centre in Belfast (£700k).
- Funded an Educational Bursary Scheme Pilot (£300k).
- Allocated seed funding to new groups to be administered by NIVT (£200k).
- Funded some small pilot support schemes in the voluntary sector (£50k).
- Establishment the Touchstone Group. This is representative of the range of victims views and provides advice to the Minister/VLU.
- Commissioned The Cost of the Troubles Study to undertake research into the needs of victim support groups.

What has still to be done

- Decide on a funding strategy for the ongoing support of victims support groups within the voluntary and community sectors
- Co-ordinate implementation of outstanding recommendations.
- Respond to the plans of the NI Memorial Fund.
- Establish links between VLU and any future devolved administration.
- Respond to the outcome of the Review of Criminal Injuries Compensation

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- Address views on Truth/Reconciliation
- Address the desire for memorials
- Continue liaison with victims and their support groups.

Resources

- £5m was identified by the Prime Minister at the launch of the Bloomfield Report in May 1998.
- We have allocated £2.25m. Funding to groups and further commitments to the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund are likely to consume the remainder.
- Additional resources of £2-£3m are likely to be needed on a recurring basis to address the future needs of victims in terms of funding for victims groups and the Memorial Fund.
- The cost of implementing the review of Criminal Injuries Compensation is unknown, but could be significant.

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Department of Health and Social Services

What has already been done

- September 1998 - issued guidance to HSS Boards and Trusts on implementing the relevant recommendations in the Bloomfield Report and asked each Board to identify an officer to take responsibility for necessary implementation.
- December 1998 - progress reports indicated that progress had been patchy.
- February 1999 - Board Chief Executives reminded of the priority of this issue. Later in February they were advised that the Department would be seeking a further progress report.
- April 1999 - Responses indicate some progress, but further pressure is needed to ensure that Boards give this initiative the necessary priority.
- Social Security Agency established a central point of contact in the Chief Executive's office to liaise with the Victims Liaison Unit. Since July 1998 26 requests to assist individual victims have been cleared within 3 working days (often sooner).
- Prior to the publication of the Bloomfield Report, the Department's Social Services Inspectorate published the report "Living with the Trauma of the Troubles". The recommendations of this report formed part of the Bloomfield Report and the Department has also been addressing the issues raised in this report.

What still has to be done

- Implementation of the Bloomfield and Social Services Inspectorate recommendations has been identified as a new key service priority for inclusion in the Health and Social Service Executive's Management Plan.

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Boards and Trusts have been asked to include implementation in their Action Plans.

- Implementation is to be discussed at this month's Accountability Review round with Board Chief Executives. To inform discussions, Boards have been asked to report on the current position regarding the implementation of each of the relevant recommendations contained in the Bloomfield Report.

Resources

- At the outset the Department estimated that, over 3 years, the cost of implementation by the HSS could amount to some £16.6m (£4.3m in 1999/20. £6m in 2000/01 and £6.3m in 2001/02. A specific bid was made during the CSR as part of a total mental health bid of £38.9m over the 3 years. Only £2.5m per annum was allocated specifically to mental health services.
- It is for Boards to decide how this money should be spent in light of their own priority needs. It is unlikely that victims will be identified as the highest clinical priority for these monies, although clearly they would benefit from any additional funds put into services which they use.
- The reality of the present resource position is that the needs of the health and social services far outstrip the resources available to meet them. Some very difficult prioritisation has had to be made and the needs of victims in pure clinical or professional terms would not normally fall into the higher priority category of needs which have to be met. If the political priority is to provide specifically for victims, then additional, ring-fenced resources will be required - the use of existing health and social services funds would mean that higher clinical priority needs would have to be cut and this would be difficult to defend in accountability and professional health and social services terms and would be likely to lead to adverse public reaction.

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Department of Agriculture

What has already been done

- The Department has had a number of approaches from the victims' group Fear Encouraged Abandoning Roots Fermanagh Ltd (FEAR) which is concerned with the plight of families displaced from their homes - often farms, as a result of intimidation.
- In essence the Group's aim is to receive financial assistance to enable its members to return to their homes and businesses on the basis that their homes and businesses would be developed to the degree that might have been the case had the residents not felt obliged to leave.
- There is no DANI (or Government?) policy to compensate or make payments in lieu of lost opportunity for investment in agriculture or any other industry.

Resources

- Any scheme to aid farmers is subject to EU State Aid rules and would have to be agreed with the European Commission. The Commission is likely to reject an Agricultural Support Scheme and would point to the Peace Programme as a more appropriate vehicle for the FEAR group. DANI has no more funds available under the current Peace Programme. Any scheme funded by DANI would have to be open to claimants in all areas of Northern Ireland. Partnership Boards under the EU Peace Programme might consider a tailored scheme to an identified need in its area. Such a case would have to be approved by the NI District Partnership Board.

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Department of Education

What has already been done

- Implementation of the Children (NI) Order 1976 has provided for an expansion and increased professionalisation of the Educational Welfare Service (some £3.5m pa)
- Following Omagh, the WELB employed an external trauma consultant for an initial period to assist with planning a "coping strategy". The Board had sufficient expertise to follow through with the necessary support for schools and pupils.
- In 1996 DENI issued guidance to schools on "Suicide among young people".
- A review of the NI Curriculum is underway, and the advice from the NI CCEA includes a recognition of the need to develop the emotional dimension of learning.
- Any pupil who experiences learning or behavioural difficulties is supported under the SEN Code of Practice which sets out a 5 stage process; outside specialists can be brought in at Stage 3 onwards if the needs are particularly acute. DENI has supported implementation of the code with an extra £3.5m in 1998/99, and an additional £7m in 99/00. This will provide additional money to schools and create a basis for improving the supply and recruitment of educational psychologists (2 per Education and Library Board from 1998/99 and a further 2 per Board from 1999/00 at a cost of £800K for the staff and £165 for educational psychology training.
- Research commissioned by Save the Children has identified the need for training for teachers and youth workers in trauma awareness etc.
- Aspects of the curriculum address the needs of young victims, including EMU, Cultural Heritage and Personal Social Education. Boards cater for the needs of young people who have suffered physical trauma by improving access or providing specialist equipment, have tuition etc.

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What has still to be done

- DENI intends to re-visit its guidance on "Suicide among young people". This could draw on any lessons from the Omagh experience and the outcome of the SEELB pilot where the services of a bereavement counsellor have been used.
- DENI will be meeting Save the Children to discuss their research particularly in the area of teacher training and curriculum development.

Resources

- DENI provided WAVE with £85K for the provision of a youth wing at their Belfast Centre under Tranche 3 of the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. In addition, Youth Net allocated £60K under Tranche 1 and £35K under Tranche 2 towards running costs.
- Post Omagh, DENI provided an additional £300K to the WELB to enable meaningful support. This covered crisis management consulting costs, home tuition, substantive teachers etc.
- Second chance education/Lifelong learning: (LLL) provides a tremendous opportunity to everyone, including victims wishing to return to learning. An additional 8,000 FE places are being funded over the next 3 years and additional funds being made available.
- Under Tranche 3, Youth Net have set aside £60K to support initiatives in relation to young victims of violence to commence in September 1999.
- Additional resources could undoubtedly be used by groups such as WAVE.

First Draft Summary of the Victims Liaison Unit Consultation Exercise**Introduction**

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield published his report, "We Will Remember Them", in May 1998. In the report, he recommended that "a reasonable time (of up to three months) should be allowed for interested individuals to react to the Report and recommendations" [para. 8.2].

Consultation scope

The consultation period was launched by Adam Ingram, then recently appointed Minister for Victims, on the 29 June 1998. The consultation exercise was advertised in Northern Ireland papers (Sunday Life, Newsletter, Irish News, Belfast Telegraph) on 10, 12 and 13 July. The consultation exercise was also extended to Great Britain shortly afterwards, because of the number of victims living there.

Letters inviting views on the Report were sent to interested individuals and organisations such as:

- those who had contributed to Sir Kenneth's report;
- victims' groups;
- community groups;
- political parties;
- churches;
- welfare organisations;
- Health and Social Services Trusts and Boards; and
- Education and Library Boards.

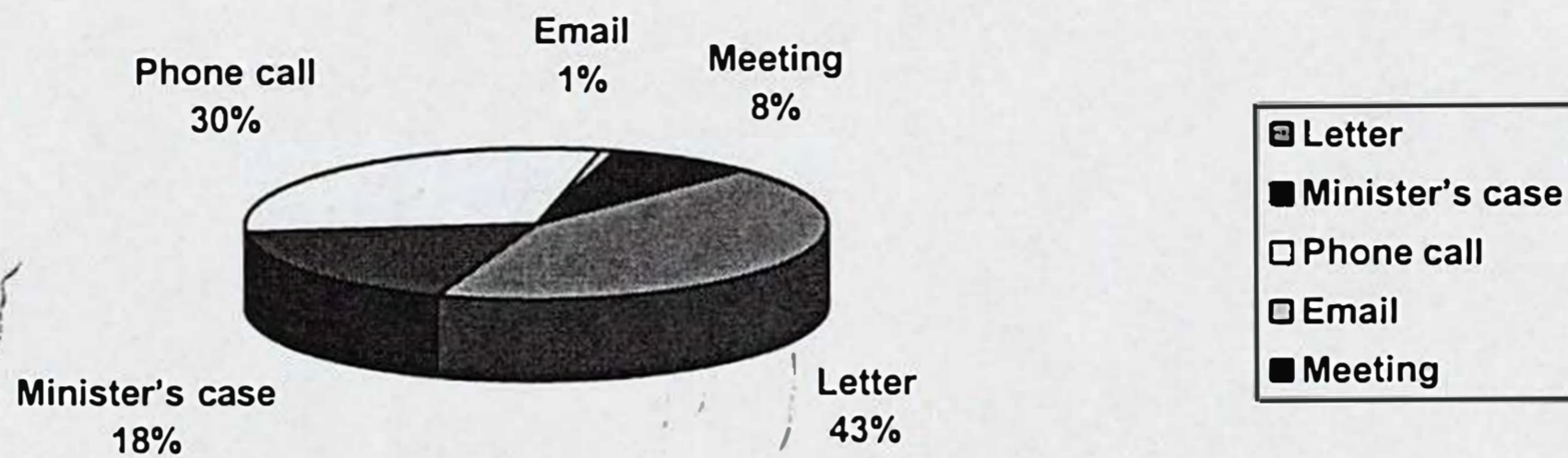
Although the consultation period was to close on 30 September 1998, in practice it was extended into 1997 in order to take as many and as wide-ranging views as possible. Not all responses were formal responses to the Bloomfield report, but many had comments to make on the recommendations which were recorded on our purpose-built database, CEDRIC.

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Who responded and how?

Response Method	Percentage
Letter	43%
Minister's case	18%
Phone call	30%
Email	1%
Meeting	8%
Total	100%

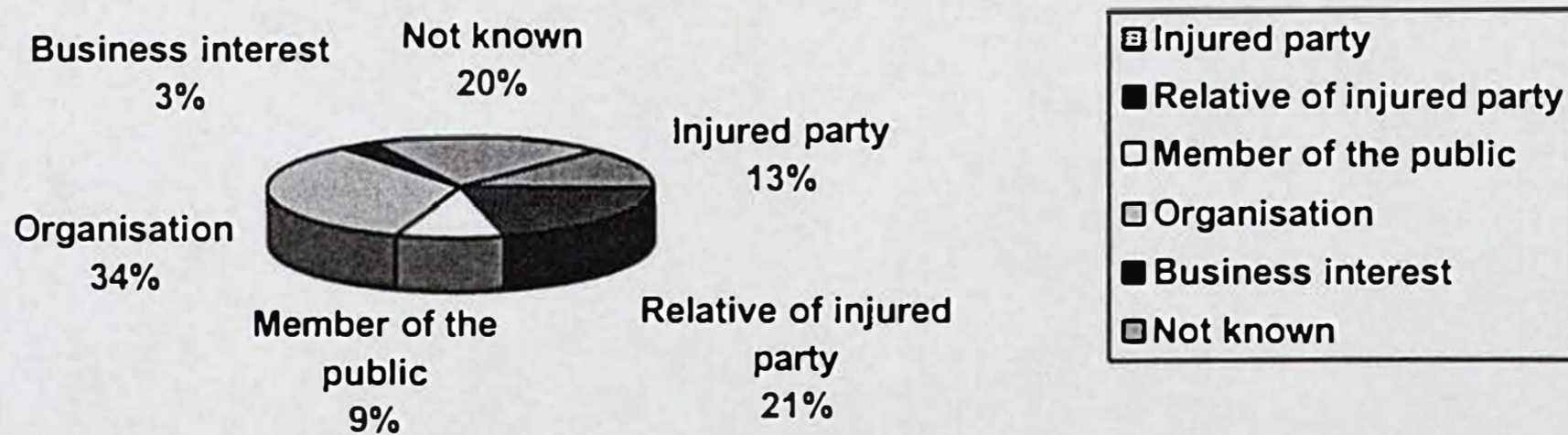
Response Method



We also categorised responses as to status:

Author status	Percentage
Injured party	13%
Relative of injured party	21%
Member of the public	9%
Organisation	34%
Business interest	3%
Not known	20%
Total	100%

Author status



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Responses to individual recommendations made by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield

Recommendation	Percentage of comments
Memorials Physical and Non-Physical	27.4
Other	17.1
Request for compensation	11.7
Truth and reconciliation	6.4
Early release of prisoners	6.2
Information and advice	5.6
Request for funding from victims' groups	4.9
SSI Report - Matters relating to	3.9
TSN - Targeting Social Needs	3.1
SSA Benefits	2.6
Umbrella group - stronger voice for victims	2.6
Pain - research and treatment of	1.8
Children's Fund - EBS	1.8
Uprooted communities - homes and farms	1.3
Employers should be more sympathetic	1.0
Great Britain	1.0
Disappeared and exiled	1.0
Ombudsman for victims	0.4
Code of practice - observed and monitored	0.2
Total	100%

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Analysis of each response category

There should be a comprehensive review of the "fitness for purpose" of Criminal Injuries compensation in serving the needs of victims of violence.

There were 119 comments under this heading.

The majority of respondents feel a great deal of hurt and anger at the amounts of compensation received. For example, a father whose daughter was killed says he received only £58. Many people felt hurt by compensation procedures, or did not know they could claim, or were denied compensation. Some were barred because of criminal records, whereas others felt that those with criminal records should not be able to claim. Some sought compensation for injuries and trauma suffered as a result of time spent serving the community in the prison service, police or army. The majority felt the current system was inadequate and not sufficiently sensitive to the needs of victims.

Suggestions include:

- recommendation that there should be a tribunal for business men and women who have been seriously disadvantaged by compensation shortfalls
- recommendation that there should be a compensation tribunal set up to quantify compensation without having to go through legal red-tape of the courts
- recommendation that those who have lost their homes as a result of the Troubles should be recompensed.
- the compensation review should have involved solicitors experienced in working with compensation law and victims
- those killed have been, in the main, from TSN areas and since compensation is linked to earnings, they are therefore disadvantaged
- those with a criminal record should not be disadvantaged in seeking compensation
- perceptions of "insulting and demeaning" levels of compensation can compound the trauma of an incident and disrupt the healing process
- there should be an urgent review of all compensation cases
- the families of the "Disappeared" should be able to claim compensation
- inequity of the three year rule for compensation claims

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Employers should be sensitive to the special circumstances of victims and their carers, and specific action should be taken by public sector employers to assure this.

There were 11 comments under the heading: "Employers should be more sympathetic".

All 10 comments agreed that employers need to be more sympathetic. One group thought that employers would not be sympathetic until Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was properly understood. Another group emphasised the need for employers and the media to be educated on this issue. A public body particularly noted this recommendation. Other comments were from those who felt that their employers had not been sufficiently understanding.

In dealing with victims within the social security and other systems officials should be sensitive and understanding in their approach.

There were 26 comments under the heading "SSA Benefits".

All believe that filling out forms and attending medicals every year in order to qualify for benefits adds to the trauma. Respondents stressed the need for sensitivity from officials. One comment was that while Disability Living Allowance was readily available for those with physical injuries, it was not for those with mental injuries, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which were just as disabling. Some complaints came from widows who have not been entitled to widows' benefit as they were too young, another widow complained that she was not able to claim housing benefit. Others complain because they could not claim Disability Living Allowance or have had it withdrawn.

Effective targeting of the special needs of victims should be a specific sub-set of the Targeting Social Need objective.

There were 32 comments under the heading: "Targeting Social Needs".

Of these comments, 29 were from organisations, and all were supportive of the needs of victims being a sub-set of the TSN objective.

Suggestions include:

- District Partnerships would help TSN
- community-based help was necessary
- there should be an audit of services within voluntary, statutory and community services for victims in order to identify gaps and resources needed
- the specific needs of rural areas should be considered

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- specialist training on effects of the Troubles should be given to psychiatrists, social workers, health workers, teachers, etc.
- help should be provided locally as there was distrust of statutory services

A senior official should be designated to take immediate responsibility for a better co-ordinated approach to the problems of victims within Government.

This recommendation has been implemented by the appointment of Adam Ingram as Minister with responsibility for victims. There was general support for this recommendation.

The recommendations of the SSI-led study on "Living with the Trauma of the Troubles" should be energetically implemented by those interests to which they are directed.

There were 42 comments under the heading: "SSI report - matters relating to".

Again, comments came mainly from organisations. The recommendations of the SSI report "Living with the Trauma of the Troubles" were widely supported.

Suggestions include:

- services should be localised or community-based for easier accessibility
- there should be a register of qualified counsellors
- models of good practice should be identified, evaluated, recorded and resourced
- need for long-term support for Trauma victims, particularly in the case of PTSD
- need for respite care for individuals suffering as a result of the "Troubles"
- need to improve limb services at Musgrave Park for amputees
- need for better co-ordination between agencies

Victims should be given the best comprehensive advice, locally differentiated, on where to turn for support.

There were 57 comments under the heading: "Information and advice".

The need for more information and advice was emphasised by all. Many stressed the importance of making good advice and counselling available. More information should be given to victims. The VLU Newsletter has received wide-spread support.

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Suggestions include:

- victims group workers should be appropriately trained
- counsellors should be professionally trained
- availability of counselling services should be increased
- need to facilitate networks between victims groups
- counselling should be offered to all who have suffered as a result of the Troubles
- need for co-ordinated response from statutory and voluntary sector agencies

Victims must, as the barest minimum, be as well served as former prisoners in terms of rehabilitation, future employment etc.

Overall, there were 63 comments made under this heading.

There were 10 comments under which could be categorised as "for the rights of prisoners". Most of these were from one group. Their main points were that prisoners resented being made to feel wholly responsible for the Troubles; prisoners were discriminated against in terms of employment and benefits on release; some ex-prisoners had contributed for good; families of prisoners had also suffered. Another group supported the early release of "politically motivated" prisoners.

There were 53 comments which could be categorised as "victims less catered for than prisoners".

These comments revealed a great deal of hurt and anger at the early release of prisoners. Most believe that prisoners are better served and better cared for than victims. Many complain about the compensation given to prisoners after the searches following the discovery of the tunnel at HMP Maze. Some were afraid that, with the release of prisoners, the killing would start again.

Suggestions include:

- money saved from the early release of prisoners should be part of a one-off payment to victims
- the media should respect the wishes of victims who do not wish to know when the perpetrators is to be released
- victims should be treated more sensitively by the administration

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In the interests of giving victims an effective "champion", existing organisations meeting their needs require more and more secure funding, and there is a strong case for a powerful "umbrella" organisation to give them a stronger voice in bidding for resources and urging changes in policy or practice.

We have received 26 comments under this heading: "Umbrella Group - Stronger voice for victims".

The responses indicated strong support for the idea of an umbrella group. There was general unease about the victims issue becoming a "political football" for some parties. Some comments came from nationalist/republican groups who believed that there had been no attempt to secure adequate nationalist/republican representation on the Touchstone Group. Equally, other groups were distrustful of the Touchstone Group as it contained "perpetrators".

Suggestions include:

- the Touchstone Group should have an independent professional facilitator
- there is a need for clarification of the role and objectives of the Touchstone Group
- local groups need more support and training
- there should be two umbrella groups, one for security force personnel and one for civilians

In the longer term, the interests of victims should be made the concern of a Standing Commission or a Protector or Ombudsman for Victims.

There were 5 comments under this heading: "Ombudsman for victims".

All comments were from organisations. One was not clear how the ombudsman concept would work or what impact the role would have on the treatment of victims. Others thought the establishment of a public body was needed to perform such a role and were broadly supportive of the recommendation.

A much higher priority should be given to treatment of and local research into chronic physical pain; the question of a Trauma Centre and the availability of residential psychiatric care for young people should be addressed.

There were 18 comments under this heading: "Pain - Research and Treatment of".

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One Health and Social Service Trust supported the need for higher priority to be given to research and treatment of pain. All comments emphasised the need for pain clinics and services, and some also emphasised the need for psychological help. Others thought that there was a need for a better geographical spread of the clinics. It was also pointed out that many victims had to go to Dublin or the USA for treatment or equipment.

Suggestions include:

- need for community based service that can follow up on hospital discharge to support treatment regimes and promote rehabilitation
- there should be a number of dedicated healing and growth centres to meet the physical and psychological needs of victims
- there should be a team of specialist physiotherapists who could be dedicated to those injured as a result of the Troubles
- need for research into management and methods for injuries due to bomb and bullet
- need for increased availability of residential psychiatric treatment for young people

The recent Code of Practice for Victims of Crime should be conscientiously observed and critically monitored.

There were 2 comments under this heading: "Code of practice - observed and monitored".

One supported the recent code of practice for victims of crime, the other the use of "victim impact statements" in the criminal justice system.

The possibility of benefiting from some form of Truth and Reconciliation Commission at some stage should not be overlooked.

There were 65 comments under this general heading.

Of these, 13 had written to express their distress and anger at the Minister's meeting with the relatives of those killed at Loughgall. The majority of comments were supportive of the concept of the process of Truth and Reconciliation, but most believe that the time is not yet right in Northern Ireland.

There were 23 comments under which could have been categorised as for the implementation of some kind of Truth and Reconciliation Commission as soon as possible. Most were from organisations which included those who have been killed by security forces. There was a great deal of hurt and anger at the attitude of the State to those they had killed. Many wanted the truth about what had happened to them and their relatives. One group was critical

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of the Bloomfield Report for not commenting on the role of the State in creating victims.

Suggestions include:

- there should be hearings where relatives and victims could seek the truth about their relatives' deaths
- advisory groups should be set up to advise and assist relatives of those killed by the security forces
- all victims should be treated equally
- Stevens, Sampson and Stalker inquiries should be published with certain passages deleted

Every effort should be made to persuade and enable those with information about the "disappeared" to disclose it.

There were 10 comments under the issue of the "Disappeared and Exiled".

7 comments support the search for information on the "Disappeared" - a particular source of pain and suffering for those left behind. The Government should do more to put pressure on those with information on the "Disappeared". There were 3 comments about the Exiled. One comment urged the Government to consider as victims those who have been forced to leave their homes and to address their needs. Two comments came from people forced out of Northern Ireland who wanted to know what the Government could do for them.

Government should not overlook the special claims of communities uprooted from their homes and farms.

There were 13 comments under this heading: "Uprooted community - homes and farms".

Most comments seek compensation for those forced from their homes and farms. Other comments urge the Government to consider the needs of those who were "ethnically cleansed" by being forced out of their homes - whole communities had been uprooted and dispersed.

Consideration should be given to the creation of a fund to assist in particular children and young people affected by the death or injury of a parent.

There were 18 comments under this heading: "Children's Fund - Educational Bursary".

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All comments support the setting up of the Educational Bursary Scheme.
Many believe that children's needs are a priority in building community relations.

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Suggestions include:

- a Trust Fund should be set up to assist children
- scholarships should be introduced to encourage young people to continue with their education and to understand the problem on both sides of the community
- many who were young when the conflict began still need help with their education

The Government should consider the possibility of supporting efforts towards peace and reconciliation originating in Great Britain and not just in Northern Ireland.

There were 11 comments under this section.

The comments under this section emphasise the sacrifice of the armed forces and feel that this has been forgotten. Victims of Northern Irish terrorism on the mainland have been ignored and forgotten. They should be included in the overall victims package. One commentator would like to see a minister for victims in GB. Other comments seek financial help and compensation.

Suggestions include:

- the setting up of an ex-service personnel care department
- the need for recognition of service sacrifice
- need for help with mental stress and trauma for service personnel

Consideration should be given, if and when the churches consider it appropriate, to the designation of a "Memorial and Reconciliation Day".

At the appropriate time, consideration should be given to a Northern Ireland Memorial in the form of a beautiful and useful building within a peaceful and harmonious garden. Such a project should be called simply "the Northern Ireland Memorial".

There were 14 comments about the "Memorial Day". These revealed a mixed reaction to this recommendation. Some support the idea, but with the caveat that it is too soon to hold such an event. Others, however, think there are too many memorials already, it is difficult for victims to have memories brought up time and again. Two members of one victims' group suggest that the idea of a civic recognition or public holiday is unproductive and could create more difficulties than it resolves.

There were 76 comments on the proposal for some type of physical memorial.

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Of the 76 comments, 51 are suggestions for different types of memorials. However, a significant proportion believe that the time is not yet right for a physical memorial. Others think it wrong to spend money on a memorial when so many victims have real needs.

There were 83 comments which emphasised the need for financial assistance for victims.

Approximately 72 of the 83 comments under this heading were either asking for financial assistance or enquiring about the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund. Most feel that the emphasis should be on practical help for those who have suffered. There was some criticism of the way the Directors of the Memorial Fund were selected.

There were 16 comments which specifically stated the need for practical help for victims rather than memorials.

Suggestions include:

- practical help from a team of qualified tradesmen
- health service should give more help to those who have been disabled as a result of the Troubles
- a real need for a Trauma centre
- there should be a team of drivers so victims do not have to endure public transport
- more money should be given to emergency services
- there is a need for more community-based physiotherapists
- a Trust for Peace and Reconciliation (e.g. Spirit of Enniskillen) or to assist in medical care (e.g. MacMillan nurses) should be set up
- an archive of victims to be placed in Northern Ireland, Canterbury Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and the Republic of Ireland
- the Government should declare a UK "Peace Day"
- a day of mourning for the dead of Omagh
- there should be an international Peace and Reconciliation Day
- the greatest memorial to victims is that it should not happen again
- a memorial to victims of IRA terrorism in Great Britain
- a wooden cross erected on the border
- an eternal flame
- a register of victims
- a dove of peace in each county
- a heritage centre
- decommissioned weapons could make a sculpture
- a museum of the Troubles or a museum of tolerance
- etc.

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Other categories

There were 50 comments the heading of "Request for funding from victims group".

37 of the 50 comments were requests for funding from many and various groups and projects. Others are opinions on where such funding should be directed and how it should be administered.

Suggestions include:

- money should be given to those groups already working in the area of reconciliation
- most people would prefer money to be given to groups who help victims
- sustainability of funding is important
- priority should be given to smaller projects which have worked within their communities to help victims
- funding should not be provided selectively, but equally
- groups should not be faced with too much bureaucracy to obtain funding
- money saved from down-sizing prisons should be diverted to helping victims groups

W - There were 174 comments under this miscellaneous heading. These included all those comments which were not readily classifiable under any other category. Many are queries about the work of the VLU or related victims' issues, others are personal and poignant stories of Troubles-related experiences which do not relate directly to the recommendations.

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