

The Feud and the Fury

section four

Lessons Learned

This report documents work still in progress. The community sector continues to draw conclusions, lessons and develop strategic ways to approach communal disturbances. Clearly, the Shankill feud was a steep learning curve for all parties involved in helping the displaced, distressed and dispersed families. In our analysis, partnerships between community organisations and statutory agencies still have a long way to go before meaningful partnerships that are based on equality are developed. This is especially relevant when considering the difference in financial support received by the community and statutory sectors. Moreover, the actions of the statutory organisations during the feud raises serious questions regarding public accountability and effectiveness. The community sector is flexible, modifies approaches as necessary and constantly evaluates its successes. The inevitable question arises, 'Who evaluates the statutory sector'? There is a serious need to examine the statutory sector and make an honest appraisal of the effectiveness of its approaches. The onus is on the statutory sector to provide services that meet the needs of the public.

This report is an indication of the difficulties experienced by both the community sector and the ordinary citizen when attempting to access support from the statutory organisations. However, this is not the first time many of these issues have been raised within the community sector. The CDC report *On the Edge* (1997) noted similar points, relating to statutory provision and media representation, which were reiterated and further developed in the 1999 report, *Drawing Back from the Edge*. Surely, there must be a point at which action is taken and

recommendations are addressed. In our analysis there are valuable points that must be raised in relation to the Shankill feud.

- A properly co-ordinated response and emergency plan by the full range of public sector bodies would have been a more appropriate response to the disturbances.
- The statutory sector has failed to adopt a proactive role - this is reflected in their inability to react speedily to the disturbances in the early weeks.
- The community sector has played, and will continue to play the key role. Indeed there is evidence to suggest that the statutory sector has relinquished its lead role to the community sector. There needs to be an acknowledgement of the key role played by the community sector as well as the validity of community concerns and local knowledge.
- The statutory sector continues to demonstrate an inability and / or an unwillingness to engage in a meaningful sense with the community and its representatives. As a result, there is a perception in the community that statutory bodies are more concerned with their systems and processes than in the human needs of the community.
- The differing needs of those families and individuals who are termed the displaced, dispersed and distressed must be addressed individually.
- An adequate response to the plight of homeowners needs to be considered.
- The statutory sector needs to reflect on the need to develop policies and procedures in relation to

communicating its activities to the community sector - accountability and transparency are key issues. The community sector needs to take the lead in agitating for policy changes to ensure the appropriate use and allocation of resources.

- The frustration with the statutory sector, clearly evident in the community, needs to be addressed.
- The statutory sector needs to reflect seriously on the inadequacy of its systems and procedures and draw upon existing sub mechanisms and resources.
- The 'neutral' and 'objective' systems and procedures implemented by the statutory sector in response to the Shankill feud are a wholly inappropriate response to the scale of human suffering generated. Given the nature and history of civil unrest in Northern Ireland this claim is not only doubtful but also impossible.
- The inadequacy of the amounts paid out by the Social Security Agency to those who have suffered remains a contentious issue in relation to the replacement of household items.
- A reformation of the Social Fund must take place at the highest level of government taking into consideration the social and political circumstances in Northern Ireland.
- In view of the trauma suffered by the displaced, and the community generally in the Greater Shankill area generally, it is vital that all groups appreciate that the healing process has only begun.
- It must be recognised that the community infrastructure in the Shankill was particularly fragmented prior to the feud. As a result, the community sector did not coordinate effectively in order to use available resources for individuals and families throughout the feud.
- The lack of coordination among community groups on the Shankill also contributed to confusion over representation and mitigated against the free flow of information from the community groups to the Interagency Group and from the statutory organisations to the community sector.
- There is still an outstanding need to provide suitable premises to facilitate the organisation of groups representing the displaced as well as provide resources.
- The statutory sector needs to address the issue of rebuilding the Greater Shankill community, a process which will involve supporting the community and key community activists to enable it to play a leading role.
- The role played by the media, locally and nationally, with a few exceptions had the effect of highlighting its view that the 'feud' was an organisational dispute over turf and / or drugs which effectively downgraded those issues relating to the impact of the 'feud' at individual and community level.
- The media and statutory organisations and the community need to take responsibility for the portrayal of the Shankill area.

We welcome a response by the statutory bodies and hope they take on board the issues raised in the report. It can be arduous to acknowledge problems, however, we are hopeful that there is a determination to rectify the situation and acknowledge the difficulties. Due to the changing political situation in Northern Ireland no one can be sure when violence, tension and intimidation will occur. When seen in this light, it is crucial that the Interagency Working Group for Displaced Families continues to meet and develop strong partnerships with community organisations, whilst acknowledging the expertise and skills found within the community sector. Finally, the accounts we present are only a snapshot of the struggle displaced families faced in dealing with public services. In the autumn a second report that details the experiences of individuals and families will be published. Meanwhile, we appeal to the statutory agencies to look beyond our criticisms and feel compelled to work towards the creation of a more just and humanitarian society. It is our hope that the citizens of Northern Ireland will be treated with the compassion and dignity they deserve.

The Feud and the Fury

key recommendations

In terms of Recommendations it is evident that the responsibility for the various initiatives lie with different sectors but also they are inter-dependent, therefore, our Recommendations would reflect this connection. Recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 4 refer specifically changes needed within the statutory sector. The community sector needs to address 5 and 6. The statutory and community sector need to work in genuine partnership to accomplish numbers 7, 8, 9 and 10. Finally, Recommendation 11 pertains to the responsibility of the media.

Recommendation 1

The re-constitution of the Interagency Working Group for Displaced Families in line with the findings of this report and the lessons learned from the 1996-2000 displacements. The Group needs to develop and implement appropriate emergency response strategies enabling a more pro-active operation, greater speed of response and better co-ordination.

Recommendation 2

A full review of legislation (including the Social Fund) and related emergency payment / compensation systems and procedures to be undertaken by the statutory sector at the highest levels in relation to issues raised by the community representatives.

Recommendation 3

The Northern Ireland Office needs to address the issue raised in relation to compensation for families and individuals with particular reference to issues of ex-prisoners.

Recommendation 4

The Northern Ireland Assembly, the Northern Ireland Office and Belfast City Council must consider their roles in relation to emergency situations, including financial support and political representation and communicate this effectively to the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.

Recommendation 5

A wide ranging investigation to be initiated by community sector into community development issues in Protestant areas with particular reference to the perceived disenfranchisement of the Protestant working class community generally. This could be done through the immediate establishment of a task force among the stakeholders in the Greater Shankill area to prepare the groundwork for a long-term strategy to address issues of community fragmentation and areas of future development. The issues and initiatives identified and generated should be prioritised by all relevant agencies with particular reference to the Belfast Regeneration Office.

Recommendation 6

Community sector to create a mechanism whereby relevant agencies, community activists and key stakeholders from all constituencies can interact in an appropriate and agreed manner. This community initiative should promote a genuine partnership approach defining clear roles and responsibilities for each organisation/groups/stakeholders.

Recommendation 7

The full integration of community representatives into the re-constituted Interagency Group. Community representatives to have the ability and to call meetings and set agendas for the Group. The community sector needs to develop mechanisms which would enable this in order that proper channels of communication which are user-friendly can be developed in terms of the Interagency Group and the community and voluntary sector.

Recommendation 8

The community sector to engage with the statutory sector to devise and implement a new 'all year round' community engagement strategy embodying 'best practise' guidelines which would enable it to effectively monitor and evaluate potential disturbances.

Recommendation 9

The creation of a community-based trauma initiative, developed in collaboration with the statutory sector, which would reflect best practice from other post-conflict situations around the world.

Recommendation 10

A Working Group, including all interested parties, to be established to investigate the varying needs of the Displaced, Dispersed and Distressed. The Group would ensure that the views of the Displaced are adequately researched and embedded in new working practices.

Recommendation 11

The media needs to review their sensationalist approach in its reporting of traumatic events with a view to highlighting the resultant human suffering. This is necessary in order so a more reflective analysis of our conflict can begin to emerge, in accord the emerging political landscape.

The Feud and the Fury

appendix

Appendix 1

Displacements as a result of the 'Shankill Feud'

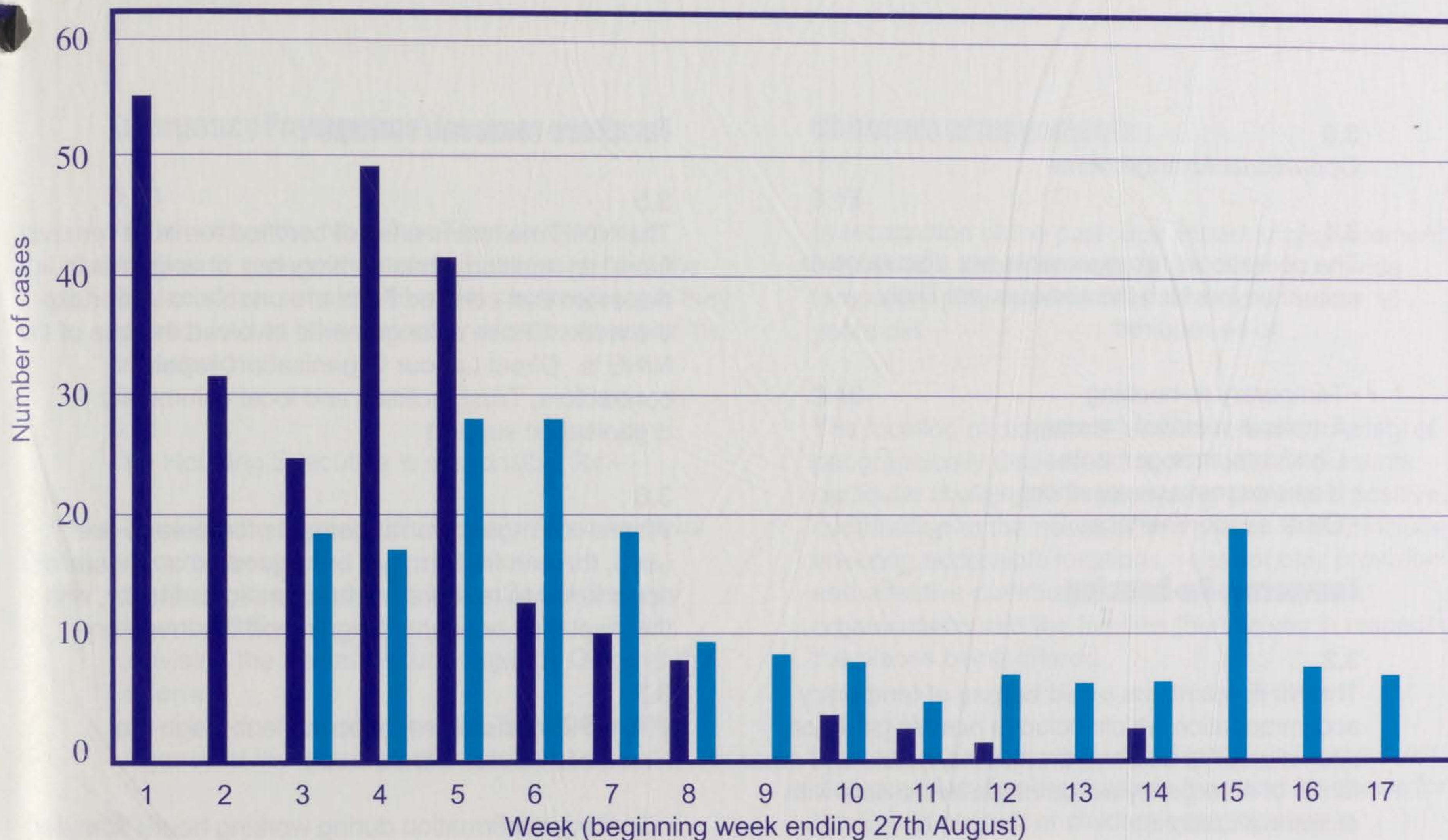
Week	Presented	Housed
1	54	0
2	31	0
3	24	0
4	49	17
5	42	27
6	13	27
7	10	17
8	8	9
9	0	8
10	3	7
11	2	3
12	1	6
13	0	5
14	2	5
15	0	18
16	0	6
17	0	5
Totals	239	178

Note Week 1 was from August 21st to 27th

These figures are from October 10th 2000

There are approximately 20 cases with no start date but have been housed i.e. private rental

Appendix 2



Appendix 3

'Operational Procedures for Displaced Families June 2000'

The main areas covered by this procedure are as follows (the paragraph numbers are from the original document):-

Groups involved:-

- N&W Belfast H&SS Trust
- S&E Belfast H&SS Trust
- NIHE
- BRO
- Social Security Agency
- RUC
- BELB
- Community Development Centre North Belfast
- Belfast Interface Project
- Springfield Inter Community Development Project

2.2

In the absence of Emergency Plan status the statutory responsibilities for dealing with displaced families lies with:-

- NIHE, under the Housing (NI) Order 1988
- Health and Social Services Trusts, under the Health and Personal Social Services Order 1972 and Children (NI) Order 1995
- Social Security Agency, under the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (NI) Act 1992

2.3

Besides these formal statutory duties and powers, other agencies have offered assistance. In particular, BRO has a network of local contacts and the capacity to lever in additional resources

2.4

Existing contact arrangements with the RUC, particularly on the scale and location of disturbances and the relocation of households will remain essential

3.0

Operational Arrangements

3.1

The operational arrangements are discussed in sequence in which the services are likely to be required

- Temporary re-housing
- Furniture removal / storage
- Childcare arrangements
- Homelessness assessment
- Other support services

Temporary Re-housing

3.2

The NIHE maintains a bed bureau of temporary accommodation which includes hostels (statutory and voluntary), bed and breakfasts, hotels and other forms of emergency accommodation to deal with extreme situations)

3.3

The NIHE, through its Homeless Advice Centre, is responsible for:-

- Securing temporary accommodation during normal working hours
- Offering transport to the accommodation (usually by taxi)
- Updating its bed bureau daily to reflect available vacancies and
- Reporting vacancies to the Duty Social Worker

3.4

The Health and Social Services Trusts through the Duty Social Worker are responsible for:-

- Securing temporary accommodation outside normal working hours
- Offering transport to the accommodation (usually by taxi)
- Advising the Homeless Advice Centre daily of referrals from the previous evening / weekend

Furniture removal/storage

3.5

The NIHE maintains a list of certified furniture removal firms. In addition it has contingency arrangements in the event that certified firms are unable to undertake the work. Those arrangements involved the use of the NIHE's Direct Labour Organisation, repair contractors, Trust facilities and local community organisation support

3.6

Where contingency arrangements for storage are used, the certified firm will be requested at the earliest opportunity to re-store the furniture in its facility, with the displaced household signing off the inventory

3.7

The NIHE is therefore responsible through the Homeless Advice Centre for:

- Seeking confirmation during working hours from the certified removal firms of availability of to undertake removal / storage
- Activating contingency arrangements (where necessary) and arranging subsequent re-storage by certified firm
- Advising the NIHE's Emergency Services department to secure the property

3.8

The Health and Social Services Trust through the Duty Social Worker is responsible for:-

- Advising outside normal working hours the NIHE's Emergency Services Department of the requirement for furniture removal / storage

3.9

The NIHE's Homeless Advice Centre and Emergency Services Department will liaise daily on furniture removal requests and the securing of property

Emergency Payments

3.10

While neither the NIHE nor Trust staff are in a position to carry out a detailed assessment of the displaced household's financial circumstances, they are required to take a number of steps to assist the household

3.11

The Housing Executive is responsible for:-

- Seeking the household's views on their financial circumstances
- Referring the household to the Social Security Agency Office
- Advising the Social Security Agency Office of the referral
- Seeking confirmation from the Social Security Agency of the outcome of the referral

3.12

The Health and Social Services Trust is responsible for:-

- Assessing and where appropriate making emergency payments at weekends or holiday periods when access to Social Security offices is not available

3.13

The Social Security Agency is responsible for:-

- Assessing the household's claim for financial support (through the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (NI) 1992 (Appendix 10))
- Confirming the outcome of the assessment to the NIHE

3.14

In situations where the household cannot gain access to assistance through Social Security, Trust, NIHE and BRO, staff will determine if alternative sources of assistance should be explored

Childcare arrangements

3.15

In recognition of the particular impact of displacement on children, arrangements will be made to provide temporary play opportunities for children under 16 years old

3.16

The location of displaced families to a wide variety of geographically dispersed accommodation presents particular challenges in attempting to make a positive contribution to the needs of this group. These include ensuring accessible locations, relevant play provision and effective communication between relevant organisations and the families themselves in respect of the places being offered

3.17

Contact with community representatives involved with displaced families emphasises the need for choice for families in respect of children's participation in proposed provisions

3.18

At the point where families have moved in to temporary accommodation an information leaflet will be distributed which gives relevant details of play schemes established to cater for children of various ages as follows:

3.19

A multi-agency group has met to identify anticipated childcare needs. As part of the process, options for play scheme provision catering for the children of displaced families will be considered. It is anticipated that at least two sites will be used for displaced children provision whereby appropriate multi-agency support would be provided

3.20

In respect of the needs of under 5 year old children, both Trusts will identify options for a small number of nursery and Mother and Toddler places which will be offered to displaced families as appropriate

Homelessness assessment

3.21

In order to ensure the permanent re-housing needs of the displaced households are established speedily, the NIHE will assess their needs immediately following their placement in temporary accommodation (including where the household re-houses itself temporarily)

3.22

The assessment procedure covers:-

- Interviewing the displaced household to determine the circumstances of their displacement
- Discussing permanent re-housing options
- Contacting other agencies (where necessary) to confirm circumstances
- Registering the household for re-housing

Other support services

3.23

Social Services have specially trained staff who may be available to those families who have experienced particular trauma in the context of civil disturbance. Referral to these staff will normally be made from Social Work staff, self-referral, or through contact from others involved in supporting the families. Appropriate involvement of specialist community based resources will be sought in respect of the presenting needs of families in need

4.0

EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

4.1

The primary contacts for services covered in this document are the Duty Social Worker and the Homeless Advice Centre, supported by the Emergency Services Department

4.2

The collection and distribution of information on the scale and nature of intervention is the responsibility of

- In the NIHE, the Belfast Area Information Officer
- In the Trusts, the Health and Social Services Officer or Public Relations Officer

4.3

The Inter Agency Group will meet as and when required to evaluate the statutory response to any civil disturbance. In particular they will determine if special arrangements to establish local sub-offices as near as practical to the source of displacement are required

6.0

COMMUNITY LIAISON

6.1

Identified community group leaders across the City will have been advised of the InterAgency response plans to homelessness due to civil disturbance and they will have been given clear lines of communication within the relevant statutory organisations in order that assistance can be provided

7.0

RUC ASSISTANCE

7.1

Contact should be made with each Sub-Divisional Commander at an early stage to discuss potential problems and agree on local initiatives

7.2

Requests for RUC assistance should in the first instance be made to the Sub-Divisional Commander for the area in question.

7.3

In cases of intimidation full details of the incident should be given so that the necessary police response

can be formulated for the protection of life and property

7.4

Police protection of persons/vehicles involved in the removal of displaced families will also be facilitated at the discretion of the Sub-Divisional Commander

The Social Fund - Grants and loans available

Staff will adopt a flexible and sympathetic approach, while adhering to all current legislation when considering requests for help

The customer must decide which element of the Fund they wish to apply for as an application is no longer treated as an application to the fund as a whole - an application must therefore be either for a Budgeting Loan, or a Community Care Grant and or a Crisis Loan. There are separate application forms for each:-

- SF 500 for a Budgeting Loan (BL)
- SF 3000 for a Community Care Grant (CCG)
- SF 400 and SF 401 for a Crisis Loan (CL)

In order to qualify for a CCG the applicant must, at the time of application, be in receipt of Income Support (IS) or Income Based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA(IB)). If a CCG is considered appropriate it will be in the form of a non-repayable award, if not the Decision Maker may go on to consider a CL

To qualify for BL the applicant must have been in receipt of either IS or JSA (IB) for 26 consecutive weeks. If the award is considered appropriate it will be in the form of an interest free loan, the repayment rate being agreed with the customer prior to the payment being issued. The maximum amount of Social Fund debt any customer and their partner can have is £1000 in total

There is no qualifying benefits required before a customer can be considered for a CL, however assistance can only be given where the expense has arisen as a result of an emergency, or as a consequence of a disaster, providing any such assistance is the only means of avoiding serious risk/damage to the health/safety of the applicant, or any member of their family

All Decision Makers are aware of the need to obtain and consider all relevant information when determining individual applications. They are advised to always use their discretion, when appropriate sensitivity and with imagination, in order to avoid a rigid interpretation of the guidance. BL decisions are made using a set of pre-determined factual criteria

Should an applicant be dissatisfied with the decision given by a DM they can ask for a review to be carried out. The decision will be reviewed by a Review Officer, however, if the applicant is still unhappy with the outcome they can have the decision reviewed by the Office of the Social Fund Commissioner which is independent of the Social Security Agency

Appendix 4

Public meetings

The Ainsworth Community Centre 4.10.00

The main audience points to arise from the meeting:-

- The procedures used for applying for grants and the decision making process are much too slow to deal with this emergency situation
- The methodology employed to estimate the costs of replacing lost items is undervaluing the real costs incurred by displaced persons
- The Housing Executive is very slow in carrying out (major and minor) repairs - there are difficulties getting in more contractors because of the nature of existing contractor contracts i.e. they have the exclusive rights to Housing Executive work - this has meant a lack of capacity / speed
- The Shankill area needs a 'one stop shop' to assist in the process of re-housing and emergency assistance
- There is a general feeling the Government must not be 'let off the hook'
- One third of the Lower Shankill has been displaced in last six weeks
- The statutory sector is trying to deal with an emergency situation using 'normal' procedures - a crisis methodology is required
- The emergency payments which have been hard fought for are to be reduced
- The DHSS have admitted to making mistakes - now need to sort out systems and procedures
- Housing Association in Woodvale is not keen to open up its stock for re-housing - same with local landlords
- There is a need to take these issues to top level politicians
- Grants only apply to those not in work - people in employment have no assistance system
- A meeting with the Campaign for the Administration of Justice had been organised to discuss issues relating to actions (or inaction) by the RUC

- EPIC is to meet the Police Ombudsman

The Ainsworth Community Centre 18.10.00

Comments from the Social Security Agency

- The Social Fund is the only mechanism to address the needs of the displaced - there are very strict criteria for Community Care Grants
- The Social Fund is only to provide additional help to unemployed, disabled or sick - it is not designed to replace 'like with like'
- The SSA must take in to account "the cheapest prices in the area" when awarding payments
- Crisis loans are available - these must be repaid - the rules of verification have been kept to a minimum - officers were housed in Chris McGimpsey's office
- Resources are stretched to the maximum
- The legislation is not appropriate for this situation
- The Social Security Agency was invited on to the Shankill but declined

Comments from the North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust

- 177 families and individuals have registered as homeless
- £47,000 paid out
- Payments end on re-housing
- 129 people paid weekly
- A counsellor and health visitor are available at Everton Centre (Thursdays and Fridays)
- Before 1996 there were no emergency payments available - this present policy was developed after '96
- The Trust has been in touch with all the local schools / head teachers and are aware of a series of issues
- The Trust should be able to access funding for families after re-housing, not for single adults - the Trust will look at cases sympathetically
- It is up to individuals and families to come to the Trust and avail of its services
- "We the public services are struggling with this situation"

Comments from the Housing Executive

- The Housing Executive has found 65 houses in the Shankill area
- If people find a house themselves they can inform the Executive and it will try to buy the house
- The Housing Executive will not pressure people into accepting houses they do not want - they will offer at least two houses in a chosen area for people to consider
- The dispersed are not presenting as homeless
- DLO staff are concentrating on the Ashmore area above Agnes Street
- Lower Shankill repairs carried out much quicker - the Housing Executive agrees this is a fact
- Housing Executive - DLOs have been intimidated
- Housing Executive agreed to bring in more contractors

Audience points:

- Social Services have not opened up any of their property for the 'displaced' to use
- Churches and voluntary sector have not opened up any of their property
- RUC say they do not have sufficient manpower to protect people - this is the responsibility of the British Government
- People will not be re-housed before Christmas
- The strategic housing plan for the Shankill area will have to be re-thought
- The Housing Executive is only diverting monies to the Shankill i.e. there are no additional monies
- The emergency situation is being dealt with via 'normal' procedures
- Hardship doesn't end after someone is re-housed
- People in employment get no assistance
- None of the child focused agencies has taken any action - kids not being acknowledged as victims - performance in '11 plus' exam could be affected in near future
- The Trust is not proactive
- NSPCC has been in touch with Trust re: kids and trauma

- The statutory sector needs to come to us - not the other way around
- In certain cases people have been forced out of their jobs and have not even been contacted by their employer

Appendix 5 **The Hammer Community Centre 1.11.00**

The main points to arise from the meeting:-

- The UDP was under the impression that the displaced were being catered for "we realise now that this is not the case - there is a clear need here to set up a Women's Committee"
- Housing Executive - two contractors working on the repairs in the Lower Shankill - threats have been made to Housing Executive staff and maintenance officers
- Housing Executive - DHSS officers are available in the Housing Executive offices on Fridays
- Housing Executive - 4 or 5 families from Mount Vernon have been displaced
- SICDP - benefits / payments are available to the displaced - payment ends on re-housing - short week-end breaks are available to anyone interested to Corrymeela with childcare workers and counsellors - transport is also available
- Audience- indicated that a number of individuals had been turned down for a community care grant - SICDP outlined the review process which needs to be initiated
- Audience - application forms for grants and payments have been filled in wrong and many re-applications will have to be done
- The UDP representatives and a number of community workers are to meet with the statutory sector - meeting planned in City Hall
- There was general agreement that a long term strategy needs to be devised for the area, possibly developing new community groups
- Political representatives arrived very late at 8.45 when most people had left

Appendix 6
North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust -
Position at March 9th 2001

Dealt with 247 individual claims

Representing:- 134 Single males
 92 Single females
 170 Children
 72 (36) Couples
 468 Total

Still dealing with 28 claims:-

Representing:- 23 Single males
 2 Single females
 1 Single parent and 2 children
 1 Single parent and 1 child
 1 Couple, 1 single male and
 1 single female
 28 Total

The Trust has also made Special Payments of

£4,325
 £2,266
 £600
Total £7,191

Appendix 7

Awaiting Re-let

These properties are normally only vacant for a short period of time, following the termination of the previous tenancy, and are either in the process of being allocated or are undergoing urgent or minor change of tenancy repairs

Major Change of Tenancy Repairs

These dwellings are in need of major repairs following the termination or previous tenancies. The repairs will usually be completed within 4 - 6 weeks

Improvement Schemes

Most of these dwellings are currently undergoing major improvement works or are included in schemes which are about to go on site, the properties are usually vacant for a short period only prior to the commencement of the work. A smaller number have been earmarked for the schemes not due to go on site in the immediate future

Used for Decanting

These properties are being used to support current improvement schemes by enabling tenants to be temporarily rehoused while works are being carried out

For Sale

These properties have been placed on market for sale because it has not been possible to let them

Used by the Security Forces

These are flats which have been secured to facilitate the Security Services in the block situated at Divis Tower

Difficult to Let

(Normally vacant < 6 months/ Unlettable/ Blocked Up
 (Normally vacant A Months)

Most of these properties are located in areas with letting difficulties, due to lack of demand, or areas where housing need has been met: those categorised as "unlettable" have been blocked up either to prevent vandalism or as a result of being vandalised

Unoccupied Reason	Belfast 5	Belfast 6
Awaiting Relet	9	7
Major COT repairs	35	7
Improvement Schemes	15	15
Used for Decanting	3	7
For Sale	3	1
Used by Security Forces	0	0
Difficult to Let	67	8
Unlettable/Blocked Up	16	127
Pending demolition	481	178
Totals	629	350

Source:Department of Social Development December 2000

